

**PERIPHERAL TRAVELERS:
HOW AMERICAN SOLO WOMEN BACKPACKERS
PARTICIPATE IN TWO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

A Dissertation

by

LESLEY ELEANOR TOMASZEWSKI

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2003

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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ABSTRACT

Peripheral Travelers:

How American Solo Women Backpackers Participate in

Two Communities of Practice. (December 2003)

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To investigate the ways in which communities of practice affect individuals' identity development, qualitative research methods were used to understand the impact solo travel had on American women's identity development. A theoretical framework developed from the disciplines of tourism, feminism and adult education was used to inform the study. Using a combined method methods approach (naturalistic inquiry and grounded theory), three components of the backpacker community of practice were identified which gave rise to a model of identity development within a particular community. This study has implications for adult education theory as it clearly suggests the interrelatedness of the social context in which this learning takes place (communities of practice), and adult development theory (identity formation). In practical terms it illustrates and also challenges the notion of identity change as irreversible, suggesting learners need constant support to retain new ways of viewing the world and themselves.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the traveling spirit within all of us. May we continue to listen to it as we travel and learn from our movements into and out of communities throughout the course of our lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere appreciation is extended to everyone who assisted in the completion of this dissertation. This includes, of course, the women who participated in my study. Interacting so closely with these women made me realize how important this study is. Our struggle to participate within two communities changes the way we perceive ourselves and the way others perceive us, making us at times feel very isolated and stateless. I began to realize that the story of our struggle had to be told.

Also, I would like to thank my dissertation committee for their valuable insights and ideas that made this dissertation what it is. I would especially like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Ralf St. Clair, who pushed me when I needed to be pushed and who cheered me on as I made my way through this journey.

I would also like to acknowledge my parents for the love and support they have given me throughout my academic career and the words of encouragement they provided while I was writing this dissertation. Without their emotional support and their firm belief in education, I would never have started to travel abroad solo nor would I have pursued a doctorate degree.

Of course, I am indebted to my fellow graduate students who have been wonderful colleagues during the last seven years. From our deep discussions on critical theory to what was on sale that week at Old Navy, I truly enjoyed our time together.

And lastly, I would like to thank my confidant, my colleague, and my husband, Roemer Visser. Because of him, this journey has been one of the most enjoyable and exciting ones I have ever had.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Theoretical framework	5
Purpose of study	6
Definitions	6
Significance of study	7
Assumptions	8
II REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE.....	9
Introduction	9
Tourism	9
Overview	9
Tourism and identity	18
Women and leisure/travel.....	20
Summary of tourism.....	24
Feminism.....	25
Overview	25
First-wave feminism.....	26
Second-wave feminism	29
Third-wave feminism	32
Women in male-dominated organizations.....	36
Summary of feminism	39
Socially constructed identity	39
Overview	39
Socially constructed identities.....	40
Communities of practice	42
Community of practice and identity	45

CHAPTER	Page
Summary of socially constructed identity	47
Conclusion.....	48
III METHOD.....	49
Introduction	49
Qualitative research.....	49
Naturalistic inquiry.....	51
Grounded theory.....	53
Generic qualitative research	55
Research design.....	56
Research questions	57
Data collection.....	57
Participants	59
Interview process.....	70
Data analysis	73
Codes and categories	73
Creation of home community of practice and backpacker community of practice	75
Limitations, issues and dilemmas.....	78
Conclusion.....	80
IV FINDINGS	81
Introduction	81
Components.....	81
Agency	82
Self-confidence.....	83
Acceptable risks	87
Feeling American	91
Freedom.....	95
Body	100
Loneliness.....	108
Summary of components – plans for future travel	115
Conclusion.....	117
V THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS	119
Introduction	119
Identity change within two communities of practice	119
Identity 1: Push from home community.....	122
Identity 2: Pull towards backpacker community and pushed from home community	124
Identity 3: Equally pulled by backpacker community and home community	127

CHAPTER	Page
Identity 4: Equally pushed away from backpacker community and home community	128
Tensions	131
Trajectories.....	132
Alternative perspectives to the multiple communities model	135
Conclusion.....	137
VI CONCLUSION	139
Introduction	139
Research questions	140
Theoretical implications	142
Implications for adult education theory and practice	142
Further research.....	143
Confessions of a doctoral candidate.....	144
REFERENCES CITED	147
APPENDIX A	154
APPENDIX B	156
APPENDIX C	158
APPENDIX D	160
VITA	164

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1 Synopsis of Research Participants.....	70
2 Synopsis of Contact and Interview Times with Participants.....	71

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

For as long as I can remember I have wanted to journey to, and interact with, foreign cultures. But there a lot of risks involved when traveling alone as a woman, such as not being respected as an equal and being treated as a sexual object (McManners, 1995). The risks are so severe that one might wonder why women travel alone at all.

Dress modestly, in accordance with local customs, noting body areas that local women keep covered.

Avoid making eye contact with men, who may take this engagement as encouragement. Wearing dark glasses helps to prevent inadvertent eye contact.

Do not allow yourself to be seduced, whether by local men or foreigners you do not know.

In a sexually repressed society, it may be expedient to seem totally aloof in the street, to avoid being judged “loose” and losing respect.

In some countries men simply do not speak to women, or take instructions from them. You have to earn their respect and get them to accept you as an “honorary man” (McManners, 1995, p. 144).

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Adult Education Quarterly*.

But I never paid attention to the risks of women traveling alone because I had always been told by my parents that I could do anything that I put my mind to, and at an early age, I knew I wanted to travel. But to do so, I knew I would have to be employed in a job that required a lot of travel, so by the age of sixteen I had decided to become an archaeologist. What better way to travel abroad? I would actually be paid to travel and interact with local cultures.

After completing my freshman year, I was lucky enough to take part in an archaeological excavation in Guatemala for two months. I spoke a little Spanish and had been working in an archaeological lab, where I had become very familiar with artifact collection and storage processes, so I was asked by the head archaeologist to go to Guatemala and process their artifacts. Traveling for work and interacting with local cultures was why I wanted to become an archaeologist, so I took the job. But while at the archeological site, I was never really alone. There were five other Americans working and we always knew that if something bad happened, we would be able to find help. So it was a very safe trip, in that respect. But it did allow me to taste what it was like to leave the familiar social network of friends and family and known culture norms, to experience a completely foreign culture without the support networks, and to my surprise, to feel part of a community.

Eager to travel under the guise of work again, I quickly completed my Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology in seven semesters. Upon graduation in December 1995, I was

contracted to work on an archeological excavation along the Mexican-American border starting in March 1996. In between the time of graduation and the excavation, I decided to travel to Italy alone for six weeks.

When I bought my ticket to Italy I knew it was not going to be like Guatemala. I would be traveling by myself. I spoke little Italian, and I hoped it would be the trip of a lifetime. But I did not know that this trip would have such a profound impact on my life and on my identity. I was faced with situations that I had never experienced before - being alone at night, dealing with extreme male harassment, missing family and friends, and worrying about being mugged or raped. Experiencing solo travel and relying on myself to overcome difficult situations gave me a sense of empowerment (I can do whatever I need to) and optimism (everything works out).

When I came back to Texas I was different. I no longer just wanted a job in archaeology, I wanted to go to graduate school and get a Master's in anthropology so I could head archaeological excavations – and I knew I could do it, because I had a feeling that I could conquer the world. I felt like Leonardo DiCaprio's character in *Titanic* - "I am the King of the World" and anything was possible for me.

But after a few months of interacting with my familiar social network of friends and family and known culture norms, I found that the King (in my case Queen) of the World feeling was leaving me and I once again felt the need for the freedom and all that went with it. The only way I knew to get it back was to travel solo again.

As I mentioned before, I thought that this trip to Italy would be my trip of a lifetime. Since that trip I have had at least seven other trips of a lifetime and I am

presently planning more. So, while it was not the trip of a lifetime, it was a trip that opened my eyes to what the world has to offer.

People have often asked me why I travel so much, and I have had to ask myself the same question every time I bought another plane ticket, even while writing this dissertation. Was I trying to escape my stagnant life here in the United States and go on a Peter Pan-like adventure abroad to experience new things? Was I running away from things here in the United States that I did not want to deal with? Before conducting my research and writing this dissertation all I could really answer was that if I stayed within the borders of the United States for longer than twelve months, I might go crazy. But I knew that was not the complete answer. The answer was that while abroad, traveling solo, I was part of a community that I could relate to. I did not have to hesitate about offending other travelers while discussing life, politics, or religion. I felt that interacting with these other travelers, from all over the world, resulted in my belonging to and contributing to a community of backpackers. And it was this community that I missed so much while at home in the United States.

But aside from this community, there was a second thing that I missed – the ability to be me. Traveling made me a different person and I missed that person. While traveling I was able to express the confidence, independence, and aggressiveness that I always knew I had but was unable to show while living at home. But am I the only person whose identity was impacted by travel? Are there other 20 to 30 year old women whose identity is impacted by traveling solo? These questions have led me to my dissertation research idea - to understand how women experience solo travel and

what impact that experience has on their identity. To see what other Generation X women thought of this, I contacted a third-wave feminist web site that was established as a sounding board for Generation X feminists, like me. One response really stood out to me.

Dear Lesley. I'm actually an avid traveler and so your question certainly resonated with me. I do think that traveling, especially alone, is a great self-esteem booster. Plus, it expands your perspective 10 fold, which is very much a feminist hope, i.e. that we stop seeing the US or white, middleclass culture as the norm. Traveling makes you realize how many ways there are to do things, not just one. I do think that women traveling in pairs or alone are still shocking to the majority and thus show that we still have many barriers to our independence, perceived or real. Amy

(Amy, personal communication, April 13, 2001)

So, with these words of encouragement, I began to look at the research previously conducted on travel and women, as well as theories in various fields that would help me on my dissertation journey.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study is to understand how women experience solo travel and what impact that experience has on their identity. This requires a theoretical framework drawn from three different academic arenas: tourism, feminism, and socially constructed identity. The tourism literature provides the characteristics of travelers, such

as backpackers, and the research on the impacts of travel on identity. Feminist theory, specifically third-wave feminism, provides the characteristics of women belonging to Generation X. Lastly, socially constructed identity, the Community of Practice model, highlights how individuals construct their identities through their social interactions.

I believe that looking at solo female travelers as tourists (tourism) who construct identities through interactions with fellow backpackers (a community of practice) as liberated younger women (feminists), may provide important and complementary insights.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand how women experience solo travel and what impact that experience has on their identity.

DEFINITIONS

Travelers: Individuals who are in “search of people, of adventure, of experience” (Boorstin, 1962, p. 85).

Backpackers: Travelers who travel abroad with all of their possessions contained in a hiking backpack for an extended period of time. Camping and hiking through the wilderness are not a requirement of this definition.

Solo women travelers: Women who travel abroad for at least four weeks alone. This includes women who have found employment during part of their journey, as long as they have traveled for at least four weeks.

Tourists: Individuals who are a “voluntary, temporary traveler, traveling in the expectation of pleasure from the novelty and change experience on a relatively long and non-recurrent round trip” (Cohen, 1974, p. 533)

Socially constructed identity: When individuals acknowledge that they belong to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to them of the group membership (Kihlstrom, Beer, & Klein, 2002).

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The significance of the study will be its addition to the limited body of research on how identity is constructed through travel and how women’s identities change. This is important because there are very few studies that have looked into how women form their identities through their social interactions, even though these interactions at times keep women on the outside. By interacting with differing communities, these women are able to alter their identity, while at the same time feeling a greater disconnect from the communities.

Through this study, I hope to establish foundations for further research on how women use travel to construct an identity as a female traveler. I also hope to add to the theory base in identity construction by examining the narratives of the participants of this study to understand daily experiences in the context of women’s identities.

ASSUMPTIONS

One assumption was that there would be American women backpacking through Europe for a period longer than four weeks who would be willing to talk about their experiences. A second assumption was that these women would be able to reflect on their experiences and articulate their meanings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature that informs this study. Since the purpose of this study is to understand how women experience solo travel and what impact that experience has on their identity, the three most relevant bodies of literature are tourism, feminist theory, and socially constructed identity. The tourism literature provides this study with how tourists are classified, research dealing with travel and identity, and research on how women experience leisure activities, such as travel. Feminism literature, from the beginning with first-wave feminism to the present with third-wave feminism, provides this study with an historical perspective of the feminist movement and how women interact in male-dominated organizations. Socially constructed identity theory explains how individuals construct their identities through their social interactions with others.

TOURISM

Overview

What is a tourist and how do we know when we become one? Attempting to define tourism and what constitutes a tourist during the 1970s and 1980s, psychologists and anthropologists wrote about tourism, discussing the idea of tourism, and attempting

to define tourists (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981). Since that time, the field of tourism has been informed by several other academic disciplines, besides anthropology and psychology. Economics, sociology, and geography have also contributed to the research done in tourism studies (Jafari & Ritchie, 1981).

Boorstin (1962), a psychologist, argues that the way people travel defines what type of traveler they are. He sees “travelers” as individuals with a privileged status, much like the young men during the 1700s who could afford the cost of traveling to exotic, and often difficult to reach, destinations. After the Second World War the number of individuals traveling significantly increased due to the increasing affordability of air travel, and Boorstin labels this group as “mass tourists” who travel in a bubble and do not experience anything outside it because they are no longer interacting with the local cultures in the same way as earlier travelers. This bubble creates a safe environment with known risks that, according to Boorstin, makes the destinations unrewarding because mass tourists do not seek interesting experiences.

The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes “sight-seeing”. He expects everything to be done to him and for him. Thus foreign travel ceased to be an activity, an experience and instead became a commodity (p. 85).

But few in the tourist field agree with Boorstin’s limited definition of a tourist. For Cohen (1974), another psychologist, tourists consist of such a broad spectrum of individuals doing different things for different reasons that a single definition could not

work. Instead he presents certain criteria that identify individuals as tourists. Below is a direct quote. Please note that Cohen gendered his tourists and travelers male.

The tourist is a temporary traveler, possessing a fixed abode, which is his permanent address even during his trip.

The tourist is a voluntary traveler, who goes on a trip of his own free will, is able to terminate his trip whenever it pleases him and is free to return to his permanent place of abode.

The tourist is a traveler on a round-trip, so that his point of departure is also his final destination.

The tourist is on a relatively long journey, and not merely on a short trip or excursion. This circumstance differentiates the tourist from the day-tripper or mere excursionist.

The tourist is on a non-recurrent trip or at least one which he undertakes rarely, rather than a trip which he embarks on regularly and to which he is well accustomed.

The tourist is a traveler, the purpose of whose trip is non-instrumental; that is, his trip is not a means to another goal (unlike a business trip) but an end in itself (pp. 531-2).

On to these the six basic criteria, Cohen (1979) adds modes in which people travel. By describing these five different modes of tourism, Cohen wants to show that there is no one universal tourism experience and that the mode of tourism influences tourists' experience:

Recreational mode: The trip as a recreational experience is a form of entertainment akin in nature to other forms of entertainment such as the cinema, theatre, or television. The tourist 'enjoys' his trip, because it restores his physical and emotional powers and endows him with a general sense of well-being.

Diversionary mode: Some people may not be seeking alternative centers: Their life, strictly speaking is 'meaningless', but they are not looking for meaning, whether in their own society or elsewhere. For such people, traveling in this mode described loses its recreational significance; it becomes purely diversionary – a mere escape for the boredom and meaninglessness of routine, everyday existence, into the forgetfulness of a vacation, which may heal the body and sooth the spirit, but does not recreate.

Experiential mode: This mode characterizes a tourist who is experience-oriented, even if he observes the life of others, remains aware of their 'otherness', which resists even after his visit; he is not 'converted' to their life, nor does he accept their lifestyle as he emerges from wanting to find an alternative meaning in life because he has become disenchanted with his own culture and its meanings.

Experimental mode: This mode of the tourist experience is characteristic of people who do not adhere any more to the spiritual center of their society, but engage in a quest for an alternative in many different directions. Examples of seekers who experiment with alternative lifestyles abound among the

younger, post-modern set of travelers; urban American, European or Australian youngsters who taste life in farming communities, the Israeli kibbutzim and hippie communes.

Existential mode: If the experimental mode characterizes the ‘seeker’ this mode in its extreme form is characteristic of the traveler who is fully committed to an “elective” spiritual center, i.e. one external to the mainstream of his native society and culture. The acceptance of such a center comes phenomenologically closest to a religious conversion (pp. 183-190).

These modes of travel help to distinguish tourists’ needs. In Cohen’s 1974 article he discusses what tourists are, but he does not discuss what they want from travel or why they travel. By looking at the different modes of travelers, Cohen shows that travelers have different expectations of their destinations.

Another way Cohen (1972) attempts to clarify “tourist” is by examining the ways in which people travel. Instead of discussing modes of travel, he discusses two different kinds of tourists: institutionalized and non-institutionalized.

Institutionalized tourists travel in what Boorstin would term a cultural bubble, allowing them to see foreign cultures without being uncomfortable in a foreign environment. This cultural bubble allows them to interact marginally with the local culture (Cohen, 1972). A good example of this is a cruise. Individuals are wined and dined on a ship where their native language is spoken and for brief periods of time they are allowed to interact with the local host culture.

Non-institutionalized tourists are quite the opposite. They consciously choose not to travel in a cultural bubble, and interact with the locals in ways that could be, at times, uncomfortable. Cohen describes two types of individuals that fit into this tourist role. They are the explorer and the drifter. Explorers and drifters arrange to travel alone and to get away from tourists as often as possible. They want to interact with members of the host culture and learn to speak a little of their language to interact more authentically with them. However, explorers do not immerse themselves deeply into the foreign culture and do not forget their “native way of life” (p. 168). Many researchers in the field of tourism have used Cohen’s modes of travel and forms of travel to help identify the types of tourists they are studying (Bruns, Richardson, & Sullivan, 1994).

MacCannell (1976), an anthropologist, takes a different approach to defining what a tourist is by explaining travel on a deeper level than Boorstin or Cohen. Instead of tourists being purely pleasure-seeking individuals, MacCannell suggests they are in search of authentic experiences, perceptions, and insights. They are involved in a pilgrimage for authentic travel experiences to offset feelings experienced in the everyday mundane world. This pilgrimage takes them away from their workplace experiences where they put others’ expectations of how they should act and behave over their own. According to MacCannell, being away from these experiences allows individuals the freedom to be themselves.

MacCannell (1976) believes that in order for tourists to acquire authentic experiences, they need to interact with individuals from the host culture while traveling. He uses the analogy of a theater stage to describe how the tourists interact with the host

culture, and how authentic their experiences are. MacCannell suggests a front-back continuum consisting of six stages:

- Stage One: front region. The kind of social space tourists attempt to overcome or to get behind.
- Stage Two: front region. It has been decorated to appear in some of its particulars like back region. It is cosmetically decorated with reminders of back region activity: mementos and atmosphere is like the back region. An example would be a seafood restaurant with fishnet hanging.
- Stage Three: front region. Organized to totally look like the back region. This is a problematical stage because it can be very hard to distinguish from stage four.
- Stage Four: back region. Opened to outsiders, like a magazine exposing the private doings of famous people.
- Stage Five: back region. It can be cleaned up or altered a bit b/c tourists are permitted an occasional glimpse in kitchens, ships, orchestra rehearsal etc.
- Stage Six: back region. "The kind of social space that motivates touristic consciousness" (MacCannell, 1976, pp. 101-102).

As individuals move in and out of these stages they have differing experiences resulting in new insights unknown in their ordinary world (MacCannell, 1976). This can be best described by exploring the theatrical metaphor a little further. In Stage One, the tourists can only see what the producer of the play wants them to. In Stage Two, they have moved toward the side of the stage and they can see a bit of the backstage. In Stage

Three, they are once again in the front of the stage, after being told that it looks identical to the backstage area. In Stage Four, tourists are allowed into the backstage area for a very short period of time without their backpack and not allowed to interact with anyone there. In Stage Five, they are allowed into the backstage area for a short period of time, with their camera, and they are allowed to speak to others only about certain things. In Stage Six, they have developed a “touristic consciousness” which “is motivated by its desire for authentic experience—but it is very difficult to know for sure if the experience is in fact authentic because it is possible that an entry to a back region is in-fact the front region” (MacCannell, 1976, p. 101). Touristic consciousness is the consciousness tourists develop when they take part of and interact with what is authentic to the location they are visiting. This consciousness only occurs in the backstage region (MacCannell, 1976).

Tourists’ movements through these stages are, as MacCannell suggests, fueled by their desire to experience authentic culture. However he believes most tourists are “mainly confined to movements between areas decorated to look like back regions, in which tourists are allowed to peek” (p. 102).

Riley (1988) defines long-term budget travelers as a subcategory of “contemporary international budget travelers” (p. 313). She interviewed nineteen men and women while they were traveling through Australia. These men and women were of varied nationalities and ages, but they were all traveling for longer than one year and were not from Australia. She points out that these individuals are not social deviants dodging their responsibilities, nor are they crusaders searching for the holy grail of

enlightenment. They are usually between the ages of 25 and 33, single and want “to experience real freedom, to seek adventure in an exotic, or at least different, setting and to satisfy curiosity about foreign places. Many of those traveling alone relish the opportunity to feel free of social pressures and constraints” (p. 318). Her participants listed wanting to meet the people as a major goal of traveling. This goal is what they use to distinguish themselves from tourists (Riley, 1988).

She found that Americans tend to feel less support from family and friends during their time away than the Europeans traveling. They mention that they feel disapproval from home because family members and close friends cannot understand why “one would not want to get on with a career and ‘settle down’” (p. 319).

When most long-term budget travelers return from their trip, Riley reports that they feel that they have changed. There is a “greater awareness of waste in the developed world, disdain for materialism, and a desire to live a simpler, unencumbered life” (p. 325). They also said they had gained self-confidence from their travels. One of her participants said, “Traveling has taught me how to survive, to be able to go anywhere without feeling fear. I can handle whatever is thrown at me” (p. 325).

This overview of tourism literature dealing with definitions presents contributions made by Boorstin, Cohen, MacCannell, and Riley. According to Boorstin there is no such person as a traveler anymore, and only tourists who lack interests in experiencing the culture in which they traveled remain. Cohen and MacCannell take a different approach, by presenting multiple forms of tourism and travelers. Finally, Riley

discusses a certain subgroup of tourists, the long-term budget travelers, and explains how they differ from other types of tourists.

Tourism and identity

There are a variety of ways in which individuals travel, and there are a variety of forms and modes (Cohen, 1979), and stages (MacCannell, 1976), that individuals experience while traveling. These varieties are as unique as the individuals who travel. But how does tourism impact the tourists' identities? Several authors have attempted to answer this question.

Graburn (1989) describes tourism as a sacred journey because he believes tourism allows individuals to reinvent themselves. Traveling away from home gives individuals a chance to be immersed in an unfamiliar setting and language, which at times could create stressful experiences. From these experiences, individuals learn about themselves and what they can emotionally and physically handle. In addition, traveling gives individuals a chance to refuel their minds and bodies because they are not partaking in the "daily humdrum often termed a 'dog's life'" (p. 22).

Graburn's sacred journey is created as individuals move between their mundane work experiences and their adventurous tourism experiences. As they move between these experiences more frequently, the adventurous tourism experiences become rites of passage marking important periods of social life (Graburn, 1989). "Each meaningful event marks the passage of time and thus life itself . . . each rite of passage thrusts us irreversibly down life's paths" (p. 21).

While traveling, Graburn's tourist is "morally on a higher plane in regard to the ordinary workday world" (p. 24). The descent from this plane when coming back home into the workday world is rather painful. He states that individuals do not feel like themselves, they feel like a new person and they are usually not accepted as this new individual when back home (Graburn, 1989). This failure to accept the new person is because individuals from the home environment remember how the traveler acted before departure. When the traveler returns with new attitudes and behaviors, they are not always met with open arms (Graburn, 1989).

Desforbes (2000) examines the connection between identity and tourist destinations. He interviewed fifteen British individuals who had traveled to Peru and stayed there for longer than one month. According to Desforbes, the most important thing about tourism is that when traveling outside the home country, the tourists encounter a new set of experiences. The tourists desire these experiences, which offer new insights into their identities.

Traveling provides a new form of identity for travelers. They are now able to define themselves in their individual experiences of the world rather than by their position in the institution of family . . . By redefining the grounds of their selfhood, they move themselves away from an identity that they share with others to one in which they use the relatively unique experiences provided to narrate a new individualized identity (p. 935).

Traveling to others cultures and undergoing culture shock can lead tourists to new insights about themselves. While undergoing culture shock tourists feel

overwhelmed by all that is foreign and strange to them. This forces them, in one way or another, to “assimilate,” meaning that individuals visiting a foreign culture learn what behavior is acceptable and they conform to it while interacting with the host culture (Bennett, 1977). The time for learning during assimilation is created when tourists undergo culture shock and become more empathic to the local culture’s worldview. As they learn how to cope in this foreign culture, Bennett states that their personal growth also increases because what is perceived as a challenge becomes motivation for creativity (Bennett, 1977).

In summary, Graburn’s sacred journey explains that while individuals travel abroad they feel like new people because of the experiences they undergo. Desforges’ connection between identity and tourist destinations, and Bennett’s culture shock reinforce the idea that while tourists travel, they undergo new experiences which offer new insights into their identities.

Women and leisure/travel

Increasingly, within the fields of tourism and leisure, there have been studies dealing with society’s impact on the types of leisure activities women are involved in. Henderson, Bialescki, Shaw, and Freysinger (1989) believe that through leisure women can learn to value themselves as individuals and challenge some of the “societal restrictions and stereotypes surrounding women” (p. 7). By challenging these social restrictions and stereotypes, women can choose their actions and activities and “pursue experiences that are rewarding, self-defining and enjoyable” (p. 15). However, women

have unequal access to leisure and leisure experiences compared to men, due mostly to the social interactions and obligations that create fewer opportunities to focus on leisure. This results in women often feeling they are not entitled to leisure (Henderson, 1990).

Feminist theory and analysis is thought by some researchers to increase women's entitlement to leisure experiences and add insights into women's roles within leisure (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). This means that women, to some degree, partake in leisure activities that are not socially acceptable. Examples of leisure activities that are not socially acceptable are women playing college American football, working on cars, or traveling solo. There are women that do engage in these types of leisure activities but they are seen as outliers who do not function within the norm.

According to Bryne-Swain (1995) tourism can be seen as an industry based upon social relations, such as those between tourists and those between natives, women and men. The impacts tourism has on the social relationships between women and men can be analyzed from the viewpoint of feminist theory and analysis (Bryne-Swain, 1995). But Scraton (1994) questions whether or not feminism as a means of tourism analysis is outdated due to the "discourse of change in which a changing world is seen to be throwing into disarray many of our shared taken-for-granted assumptions, values, and theories" (p. 681). In the end, she concludes that feminism can be used as a part of "leisure theorizing so that the lives of women, including their leisure lives, can be understood, improved and the power relations of gender ultimately challenged and changed" (p. 692).

Leisure studies has great potential to help women reconstruct their identities to resist male tourist definitions and control by focusing more on issues that are related to women and minorities (Wearing, 1992). Using cultural studies to explain how society places limitations on both men and women's leisure activities, researchers in the field of leisure have come to realize that most women are still constrained in their choice of leisure activities (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). However, not all women are constrained in the leisure activities they partake in. These women have "freedom from roles and associated responsibilities and freedom for self-determination and expression" (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992, p. 23).

Pritchard and Morgan (2000) review several works on tourism and gender and suggest that there are two types of landscapes offered to tourists - feminine and masculine. Landscapes are considered tourist destination packages. The feminine landscape invites women to discover heterosexual romantic treasures, while the masculine landscape invites men to rediscover the natural world. According to Pritchard and Morgan these two different landscapes do not match what women and men want as tourism consumers, and because of this mismatch tourism should refocus on "identity associated societal change and what it means for men and women" (p. 354).

Gibson and Jordan (1998) interviewed thirty British and American women between the ages of thirty and fifty-five who identified themselves as solo travelers to examine how their travel experiences affected their lives. Through the course of the interviews it became apparent that these thirty women felt vulnerable when they traveled

because they were foreigners and alone. Gibson and Jordan (1998) link vulnerability to how safe women felt being alone in a foreign country. For most women, this was the first time in their lives they had ever felt restrained in what they could or could not do. This restraint took its toll at times because the women felt very limited in what activities they could do and what time of day they could go out, which made them feel even more like outsiders. Gibson and Jordan conclude that these feelings of being an outsider created temporal and spatial constraints, causing these solo women travelers to experience feelings of discomfort. They did not pursue why these women felt this way, what impact these feelings had on their identities, or even why these women continued to travel alone if solo travel was so uncomfortable.

Elsrud (1998) discusses how women backpackers make time for themselves while traveling. She interviewed eleven Swedish women between the ages of 22 and 71 who had traveled at least once as a backpacker to find out about travel experiences in connection to womanhood and to add to the earlier heavily male-biased research conducted on tourism and travel (Elsrud, 1998). While traveling, these women no longer had to function in the same time they had to while at home. They no longer had to do what is considered important at home and they were allowed to travel in an unstructured mode. They were free to do what they pleased, when they pleased. “Naturally the traveller still carries with her the cognitive structures influenced by clock-time norms and values . . . however, the structures of home lose their potency when not practiced and upheld in everyday routines” (p. 328). Moving from place to place, the

travelers are allowed to create their own time, creating freedom and control over personal time (Elsrud, 1998).

The studies cited above on tourism and gender and tourism's impact on identity have added credibility to the argument that tourism is more than a form of escapism. However, these articles do not address how tourism impacts identity. They simply show that tourists report changing as a result of their travel experiences. Perhaps by taking a different perspective on studying tourists, such as experiential learning and communities of practice, more can be understood about the impact of tourism on solo female travelers.

Summary of tourism

In this section, a brief overview of tourism is presented to familiarize the reader with what the term tourist means and how the tourism field goes about categorizing tourists into different modes and stages. Non-institutionalized tourists in the experiential mode (Cohen 1972; 1974) and long-term budget travelers (Riley, 1988) have the characteristics that I used to identify backpackers.

This section also presents tourism literature dealing with the impact tourism has on individuals' identities and how tourism has impacted the lives of women. Tourists are able to reinvent themselves (Graburn, 1989), encounter new experiences (Desforges 2000), and learn about themselves (Bennett, 1977) while traveling abroad. Leisure gives women a chance to reconstruct their identities (Wearing, 1992) and tourism gives women time to travel in an unstructured mode (Elsrud, 1998).

FEMINISM

Overview

Feminism did not begin in the 1800s with the women's suffrage movement or in the 1960s with women burning their bras to rebel against the American patriarchal system (DuPlessis & Snow, 1998). It goes back at least to the late 1700s with the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft referred to as "the mother of feminism" (Todd, 2002). Wollstonecraft was a middle class educated woman from England who was inspired by the Enlightenment argument that reason should be at the center of human identity, and should be the fundamental justification for human rights (Todd, 2002).

In 1791 Wollstonecraft wrote the *Vindication of the rights of woman* (Todd, 2002). In this book she argued that women had the right to be educated and that, through education, both women and men would have equal freedom. She believed that a woman's place was not only in the home, but also in the state because, in her view, there was no separation between public and domestic life. Instead, these lives were connected, with the home (domestic life) forming the foundations of society (public life).

Even though her writing was well received, it was not until the late 1800s that women in America came together to push for equal rights in the home and in public through the women's suffrage movement. Since that time, there have been three waves within the feminism movement (DuPlessis & Snow, 1998). The first-wave was between

the late 1800s and the 1940s. The second-wave was associated with Gloria Steinem and furthering women's rights between the 1960s and the 1990s. Since then, the third-wave feminist movement, also interested in furthering women's rights, has been propelled mainly by women born during the 1970s – members of Generation X.

Using the wave metaphor when describing the three different movements underlies the “continuities within feminist thought and action and acknowledges differences within feminist movements. Rather than thinking of feminist generations or waves only in terms of mother/daughter; teacher/student divide, it seems productive to consider how these terms suggest feminist movements understood as changing, informed by particular locations and specific struggles” (Gilmore, 2001, p. 215).

First-wave feminism

First-wave feminism is usually associated with the women's suffrage movement during the later 1800s and early 1900s. It more or less ended in 1920 with the passage of suffrage, the 19th Amendment. After this time, the main women's organizations lost substantial public visibility and “feminism entered a long period of dormancy” (Schneir, 1994, p. xi).

The first-wave feminist movement started with the abolitionist movement to defend slaves' rights, which grew to include women's rights (Tong, 2001). Yet, most abolitionist supporters did not see women as an oppressed group like slaves, so early feminists were asked to downplay the women's rights issue until after the slaves were freed. After the slaves were freed, women still were not seen as an oppressed group and

they found themselves fighting against newly freed slaves for public recognition (Tong, 2001). It was at this time that women such as Elizabeth Cady-Stanton and Susan Anthony entered the feminist scene.

Cady-Stanton was an educated middle-class woman who objected to the educational disadvantages under which women of her day labored. In 1848, she organized the first “Woman’s Rights Convention” in Seneca Falls, NY, to draft a “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions.” It declared that all men and women are created equal and have certain unalienable rights. In addition to this declaration, eleven resolutions were passed, the ninth being the suffrage resolution that passed only by a narrow margin. Even Cady-Stanton’s husband refused to attend the convention because he thought it was absurd for women to have the right to vote. In total, over 300 men and women attended the convention with 68 women and 32 men signing the declaration (Magarey, 2002).

However, within a few weeks many of the people who signed the declaration asked for their names to be withdrawn due to the negative press the convention had received. Cady-Stanton saw this as an opportunity to inform men and women about the rights women were being denied, and her public response to the negative press through newspaper editorials helped to spread the word and to encourage other women to hold womens’ rights meetings (Magarey, 2002).

In 1852, Susan B. Anthony, a Quaker reformer, joined the women’s rights movement. She had heard about the Seneca Falls Convention from her parents and sister. But at this time, she was more interested in the anti-slavery movement and

believed the goals of the women's movement secondary. In 1852, Anthony met Cady-Stanton, became a proponent for women's rights, and the two formed a life-long political partnership (Magarey, 2002). Within their partnership Cady-Stanton wrote articles, speeches, and letters while Anthony traveled the country lecturing and organizing women's rights associations. Because Anthony was more in the public eye, she received both more praise and more ridicule for the women's movement than Cady-Stanton (Magarey, 2002).

In 1890 the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was formed with the first presidents being Cady-Stanton and Anthony. But soon, Cady-Stanton was asked to step aside due to her liberal ideas. She openly criticized NAWSA's narrow-mindedness and believed that NAWSA's membership should include all "types and classes, races and creeds." Also, after she published the *Women's bible*, a book about the negative portrayal of women in the both the Old and New Testament of the bible, Cady-Stanton was publicly censured by the NAWSA. It was only a matter of time until Anthony's name replaced Cady-Stanton's when discussing influential women in the women's rights movement (Magarey, 2002). In 1902, Cady-Stanton died, followed four years later by Anthony.

The women's movement did not die with them. Leaders in the women's movement were better educated and had been given more opportunities than Cady-Stanton or Anthony, to some extent because of what these two women had achieved. In 1920, the 19th Amendment was passed and women were finally given the right to vote (Magarey, 2002). However, the leaders within the suffrage movement did not criticize

women's continuing inferior social status, leaving women with the right to vote but not leaving them with a "broad feminist consciousness" (Ferree & Hess, 2000) that would help them fight for equal rights. After women were given the right to vote they returned to their private sphere, the home, and did not reemerge until the Second World War when women in great numbers left home to work in factories (Tong, 2001). But as soon as the men returned, the majority of women again returned to their homes and "embraced an ideology that idealized the suburban, nuclear family consisting of a wage earning father, a stay at home mother and two children" (Tong, 2001, p. 176).

Yet by the 1960s, the daughters of these housewives started to reject their mothers' conformity. They wanted to rethink and re-evaluate everything that had been taught to them, including what it meant to be a woman. It was during this time that second-wave feminism was created (Tong, 2001).

Second-wave feminism

During the 1960s the Civil Rights Movement was sweeping through the nation, proclaiming that justice could be obtained through moral and spiritual resistance to oppressive legal structures (DuPlessis & Snow, 1998). Members of the Civil Rights Movement believed that they could transform society into what they wanted it to be through their acts. "Young women who became feminist activists shared with their generation this social, spiritual, and emotional yearning for a better world for all" (DuPlessis & Snow, 1998, p. 6).

The Civil Rights Movement inspired second-wave feminists to protest the inequality they were experiencing both in the home and in the workplace (Ferree & Hess, 2000). From this they learned that they could overcome substantial challenges, creating a sense of personal growth, and also that if they wanted things to change they were going have to build a movement of their own. Feminists also gained skills at organizing people and events to implement change effectively. Examples of their tactics include civil disobedience, mass demonstrations, and passive resistance (Ferree & Hess, 2000). This movement is largely associated with white, educated women. Though black women were also involved with the second-wave feminist movement they were usually organized under the Civil Rights Movement umbrella instead of the feminists' (DuPlessis & Snow, 1998).

Gloria Steinem is one of the key writers and speakers of second-wave feminism. Born in 1934 to a middle class family in Ohio, her father left her family when she was ten years old. She was left at home to take care of her sick mother. After graduating from Smith College, magna cum laude, she was awarded a fellowship to spend two years in India. While in India, she witnessed first hand the struggle of women trying to function in a male-dominated society (Stern, 1997).

Upon returning to the United States, she tried to get a job as a journalist and found it almost impossible. It was also during this time that she became interested in the women's movement in America. In 1969 she wrote *After black power, women's liberation* and in 1970 she won the Penney-Missouri Journalism Award for this publication. In 1971, she helped to found *Ms. Magazine*, the National Women's

Political Caucus, and the Women's Action Alliance which placed her at the forefront of the women's movement and feminism (Stern, 1997).

In 1970, Steinem published '*Women's liberation' aims to free men, too* in the Washington Post. She begins this article with:

This is the year of Women's Liberation. Or at least it's the year the press has discovered a movement that has been strong for several years now and reported it as a small, privileged, rather lunatic event instead of a major revolution in consciousness – in everyone's consciousness, male or female – that I believe it truly is (1970, p. I92).

She goes on to state that this movement should be termed humanist instead of feminist because the American society, unconsciously, was suppressing individuals within its culture due to its sexist language. Because this language was an integral part of our society, we were suppressing men and women alike. She believed that America's children were "suffering from too much mother and too little father" (p. I93) due to an imbalance between women's and men's responsibilities at home and at work. The only way to restore the balance between the sexes was to liberate, in her words, women and men. And the women's movement was doing just that, by acting as a bridge between women and men where liberation could occur. Unfortunately, too few men and women were interested in building this bridge and soon the feminist movement was seen as the angry women's movement that no one wanted to associate with (Steinem, 1970).

By the 1980s there was a negative portrayal of feminism. To be a feminist, it was thought that a woman hated men and was ready to march for any cause (Faludi,

1992). Susan Faludi (1992) published *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women* to discuss the negative portrayal of feminism. In her eyes this was in part due to the backlash against career-minded women. She, like Steinem, argued that women were still not being treated equally to men (Faludi, 1992).

Faludi's main target is the American media. She thinks they have way too much control and that the mass media have moved from reporting the news into creating it, and describes several cases in which this happened. She sees the media's portrayal of women as either happy stay at home moms (Hope in the T.V. show "thirtysomething") or as deranged sexual beings (Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction*) because they represent exactly what women had fought against the last 30 years. She believes that younger women care far too much about their looks and far too little about how they are treated by the members of society (Faludi, 1992). It was not until 1992 that this dismissal of feminism by younger women changed.

Third-wave feminism

During the late 1980s and the early 1990s women of Generation X came to feel that the second-wave feminists did not represent them. They felt that too much attention had been given to white, privileged women and too little attention to women from differing social classes, races, and sexual orientations. To deal with this imbalance, third-wave feminists integrated all types of women and wanted "to incorporate all types of feminist activism and perspectives into what they hoped to be a more practical application of feminism in their lives" (Gilmore, 2001, p. 217). At first, many women

believed that third-wave feminism did not define itself by what it stood for, but rather by its rejection of second-wave feminism. Third wavers perceived second-wave feminism as “naive, obsolete, or otherwise somehow lacking in relevance to their lives” (Bailey, 1997, p. 21). They also saw it as conforming “to an identity and a way of living that did not allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect histories” (Walker, 1995, p. xxxiii).

Gilmore (2001) believes that because young women did not partake in the same form of feminism as the second wavers, they were not truly feminist and that their participation was not meaningful. However, many young women regard themselves as feminists and are tired of being dismissed by second-wave feminists. To emphasize and clarify their form of feminism, they mark the differences between their principles and priorities and those of second-wave feminists. But Gilmore argues that ultimately there are more connections between the two waves of feminism than there are fractures.

To Gilmore, the defining feature of the third-wave is the difficulty in creating a clear inclusive definition. Third-wave feminists “prefer disunity over homogeneity, choosing instead to embrace all their complexities” (Gilmore, 2001, p. 217). Second-wave feminists would disagree with this statement because they believe that heterogeneity was a fundamental component of feminism. Ironically, though, third-wave feminists see the second-wavers as being too divided. They want to unite different factions of feminism, such as Black Feminism and Lesbian Feminism, into the same group.

When two third-wave feminists, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, appeared on the syndicated Oprah show in 2001, their book *Manifesta: Young women, feminism, and the future* became nationally known. They believe that feminism has become mainstream in the American society, that the women of Generation X do not consider themselves feminists. They feel that they resemble popular fictional characters like Ally McBeal and Bridget Jones rather than Gloria Steinem or Susan Anthony. However, the issues that are important to them are very similar to those important to second-wave feminists. These issues include: equal access to internet and technology, more AIDS/HIV awareness, coping with eating disorders, and body image (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). To deal with these issues, Baumgardner and Richards (2000) present a manifesta for third wave feminists in the form of a thirteen point agenda. The last agenda point is “to pass the Equal Rights Amendments so that we can have a constitutional foundation of righteousness and equality upon which future women’s rights conventions will stand” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 281).

Characteristic concerns of third-wave feminists include women’s reproductive rights and their sexuality, and equality in the workplace and in government (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). These characteristics are very similar to those of second-wave feminists, however third-wave feminists are not as visible as their foremothers were. Hogeland (2001) stresses that there are real political differences between second and third-wave feminists that are not just generational. She argues there are :

different ways we see the relationship between consciousness and change, between individuals and social movements. We have in feminism radically different understandings of how change happens, of what constitutes social change, and thus of the goals and purposes of feminism itself. But these differences are not generational; they are political and theoretical and they have roots in second-wave theories and practices of consciousness raising (Hogeland, 2001, p. 115).

Her point is not that third-wave feminists do not have anything new to say, but that obsessing on the generational differences between the two prevents anybody from moving ahead.

Young(er) and old(er) feminists have much to say to each other about their specific historical locations, about the effects of ageism on their efforts, about how women's experiences in patriarchy differ because of age. But the false belief that political differences are generational differences makes these and other crucial conversations impossible (Hogeland, 2001, p. 121).

Growing up during the 1970s and the 1980s, Drake (1997), like many other third-wave feminists, had taken many of the second wave's accomplishments for granted. Yet, she believes that the differences between the two waves are being emphasized too much. And it will not be until these differences are put to the side that feminism can move ahead.

When we are divided the struggle into mine and yours, without overlap and alliance, when we see other women's achievements as obstacles to our own,

when we run from feminist movements at the first sign that sisterhood is not warm and fuzzy, we sell out coalition for a catfight (Drake, 1997, p. 97).

Shugart (2001) also sees parallels between the two forms of feminism. She presents third-wave feminism as a subculture of Generation X rather than an evolutionary phase of feminism. She reasons that just because third-wave feminists dress differently than older feminists, they are still educated and independently-minded like earlier feminists (Shugart, 2001).

Third-wave feminists want to show that they are different from the earlier wave because they believe the time of social revolution is past and that “the compulsive reification of those roles--of women as oppressed, men as oppressors--is unnecessary and even harmful, serving to constrain women rather than inspire them to action” (Shugart, 2001, p. 134). They also believe that they no longer have to bear the burden of all women and that they are only responsible to and for themselves, not representative of the generations of women past, present, and future (Shugart, 2001).

Women in male-dominated organizations

Organizations are gendered spaces with traditional gender-roles learned prior to working in the organization playing an important part (Katila & Merilainen, 2002).

Women working in these spaces, specifically male-dominated ones, deal with more stress than women working in female-dominated contexts (Nelson & Quick, 1985). This stress is usually caused by the false assumptions that are made of women working in these environments. These include that women “are too emotional, make for terrible

bosses that men refuse to work for lose their femininity if they are put into a managerial role, cannot have two jobs; the career and/or the home life will suffer” (Lynch, 1973, p. 59).

Literature dealing with women working in male-dominated organizations shows two possible strategies. Some studies show that women form a group of their own, a place where they are allowed to work in a collaborative and supportive way, while other studies show women opting out of forming a women’s-only group and continuing to work with the established male-dominated group (Tomaszewski & Callahan, 2003).

Women working together, mentoring each other and creating new ways to interact is an important element for women working in male-dominated organizations (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001). When women work in this type of organization it is easy for men to see them as “needy” if they ask for assistance or “pushy” if they are self-promoting because they are not admitted into the male support system. However, if the women work together to create a place to work in a collaborative and supportive way, they can help improve their career progress and their work environment (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001).

However, Dunivan (1988) discusses a group of women within a male-dominated organization who do not develop a support system. In a study of women in the military she notices that the women have little gender consciousness. Gender consciousness is awareness that gender is socially and culturally constructed, and that societies have roles that are based on how males and females should act (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994).

The women in Dunivan's study who do not identify with the feminist movement are interested in equal benefits but not necessarily social change. They also do not identify with women's issues and/or women's groups because they see women's issues as being irrelevant to their careers. It is more important to stay on top of current issues that could impact their jobs. Lastly, the women do not network with each other because they had created working relationships with other men in their career area, resulting in no formation of a support system among the women. Dunivan states that as long as the military does not create more networking opportunities for women to create a sense of collaboration or support, there will be a lack of gender consciousness among these women. However, there are no incentives for women to identify with their gender because men dominate the organization (Dunivan, 1988).

Tomaszewski and Callahan (2003) researched women in a male-dominated organization believing that these women had created a support group in which they were able to cope while working in this organization. To their surprise, upon analysis, they realized that these women had not formed support groups, but participated within the established male-dominated community. If they had created their own support system and not interacted with the men, they would have risked losing the language and culture of the organization, reducing them to the status of outsiders (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996).

In summary, while interacting with a group that is particularly male-dominated, women have, as mentioned above, two options. Their first option is to approach other women and create their own support group that is not male-dominated and is

collaborative and supportive. The second option is to interact with the established male-dominated group and learn how to participate according to the men's rule.

Summary of feminism

This section presents an overview of the three different waves of feminism is presented Characteristics of third-wave feminists are very similar to those of second-wave feminists (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Drake 1997) however third-wave feminists also see themselves as being different from second-wave feminists because they are more inclusive (Shugart, 2001). Also presented in this section is how women interact in male-dominated organizations. They create a supportive and collaborative network (Bagihole & Goode, 2001) or interact in with the established male-dominated organization (Dunivan, 1988).

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED IDENTITY

Overview

Adult education can be defined as “activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults” (Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 8). These activities are not limited to adults learning to read in a classroom or to obtain their GED. It is also about adults wanting to undergo personal growth by undertaking new things in a more general sense, including traveling abroad.

The purpose of this section on socially constructed identity is to familiarize the reader with the theory of socially constructed identity and the Communities of Practice model where identity is socially constructed and provides a way for individuals to interact with one another during learning.

Socially constructed identities

Social identities exist when individuals acknowledge that they belong to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to them of the group membership (Kihlstrom et al., 2002). This idea that individuals belong to a certain group that helps them to create meaning started in the late 1800s and the early 1900s with the writings of George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, and William James (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Of particular interest is Cooley's idea of the "looking-glass self" meaning that individuals derive many of their ideas and feelings about themselves from watching, and imagining, others' reactions to them (Cooley, 1902; Holland et al., 1998). In this tradition, the "self" is not a coherent whole but rather a multitude of potentials and feelings, which has both a reactive "looking-glass" quality and a constructed quality. The self is not static; individuals continue to create their identity throughout their lives in the presence of others. The self is a performance, influenced by setting and audience, and by perceptions of setting and audience (Goffman, 1959). Not only is behavior influenced by these settings, but also individuals' entire meaning system comes from their interactions with others. These

interactions include individuals' earliest notions of themselves as separate from their family members and their behavior when approaching death.

Goffman, an influential sociologist working within the symbolic interaction perspective, was particularly concerned with certain aspects of deviant identity production. In *The presentation of self in everyday life* (1959), he discusses “stigmatized persons” where individuals have a devalued and demeaned identity, among others. This identity is created through individuals' interactions with others where they obsess on negative attributes of their personalities. In *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity* (1963) Goffman elaborates the ways individuals resist membership in a stigmatized category by controlling the amount of information others have and creating distance away from others in a stigmatized category.

Adding to the idea that individuals can have differing identities and can choose which identity they want to express, Robert Prus (1996) suggests that individuals use several different methods to maintain their identity:

As products of interaction, people's identities are also fundamentally linked to the identities of their associates. Consequently, identity work reflects ongoing assessments and negotiations as the parties involved jointly endeavor to work out self and other definitions. The processes entailed include:

encountering definitions of self from others, attributing qualities to self (self definition), comparing incoming and self-assigned definitions of self, resisting unwanted identity amputations, selectively conveying information about self to

others, gleaning information about others, assigning identities to others, promoting specific definitions of others, and encountering resistance from others (Prus, 1996, pp. 152-153).

Clearly there are many factors that contribute to our identity construction. While we do have control over some aspects of it, the environment and the individuals surrounding us have a great impact on who we are and what our identity is.

Individuals construct their identity through their interaction with society, including observation and speaking. It is in the act of speaking that identity can become engendered. When an individual “invokes his/her identity, they draw upon discursive forms but always/already partially. The inability to fully determine the identities of self and practice has the effect of engendering space for contingency and for choice” (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996, p. 52). When individuals agree to a common vocal language, there are certain culturally situated words that engender individuals and that reflect, reinforce, and reproduce domination.

In summary, because individuals construct their identity through their interactions with others, how they exhibit their identity and which identity they choose to exhibit (sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously) is based on these interactions.

Communities of practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) introduce the idea that learning is undertaken “through centripetal participation in the learning curriculum of the ambient community” (p. 100).

This ambient community they term the “community of practice.” Individuals who want to be part of a certain community interact with its core members and learn the community’s culture, ultimately becoming part of the community.

A community of practice can be seen as a circle, where core members are on the inside of the circle and others are on the periphery. The core members are most likely those individuals that are the most knowledgeable of the community’s practices (Wenger, Synder, & McDermott, 2002).

In contrast to the core, the periphery is the region that is neither fully inside nor fully outside, surrounding the community with a degree of permeability. This permeability facilitates learning as core members participate with members of their community and outsiders in their community, because the core members are teaching the practices of the community to the others (Lave & Wenger, 1991). All individuals in the community of practice are considered members, whether in the core or on the periphery.

While members can have many types of participation, the two important to this study are peripherality and marginality. Peripherality refers to individuals on the periphery who are participating to some degree within the community of practice, but have not been accepted as core members (Wenger, 1998). Marginality refers to individuals, also on the periphery, whose level of participation has decreased through time (Wenger, 1998). This includes, for example, long-standing members who have not changed the way they participate within the community even though the community has changed.

If members are only allowed to participate in the periphery, and not allowed into the core, sooner or later they will become complacent, decreasing the extent to which learning occurs within the community of practice. In the Communities of Practice model, learning and participating are one. By participating in different communities of practice at differing levels, individuals are learning about how they function in different communities and actively creating an identity for themselves (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger (1998) discusses the elements needed to form communities of practice. He argues that a community of practice must have three elements: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire.

Mutual engagement refers to individuals' interaction with each other to create relationship among its members. Being a member involves more than being declared a member - it is actively engaging in activities/practices with others. This tightens the members' interpersonal relationships and helps them to establish their identities (Wenger, 1998). An example would be the activities of a student-run organization that binds members together into a social entity, like the TAMU International Graduate Student Association. This association organizes and promotes international student issues on campus, but they also have formed a network where they interact socially.

Joint enterprise refers to a common purpose that binds the members together and provides a unifying goal. It creates relations among individuals that become an integral part of the practice through negotiated goals, group identity, and mutual accountability (Wenger, 1998). With joint enterprise, the members of a community of practice can accomplish goals that they mutually create and obtain together. An example would be

the way the members of TAMU International Graduate Student Association understand the goals of the club and how they can go about changing their participation level within IGSA.

Shared repertoire refers to all those things members of a community of practice do, and all the ways they go about doing things. It does not include just the work the members have in common, but the methods, tools and behavior patterns they use to accomplish their goals (Wenger, 1998). This is the most obvious outcome of a community of practice, as it gives members a shared history, creating a sense of identity and belonging. An example would be the T-shirts members wear and the routines that are only known to the members of the TAMU International Graduate Student Association because they have jointly created them.

Community of practice and identity

One advantage of the Community of Practice model is that it takes into account both individual attributes, such as identity, and the influences of the larger social context (the community) where the individual participates. Wenger (1998) states that “building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings or our experience of membership in social communities” (p. 145). Identity is not something that individuals are born with, nor something individuals retain throughout their lives. It is “not an object, but a constant becoming. The work of identity is always going on” (p. 154). What defines identity is degree of participation in various communities of practice as well as the trajectories taken through these communities. The degree of participation is a result of

both individuals' choice and of other members' desires (Wenger, 1998). For example, a member of the TAMU International Graduate Student Association might be rejected for the presidency, in spite of the member's qualifications or intentions. Similarly, the trajectory undertaken within a community of practice is also a result of both individual choice and the community of practice's influence. A trajectory is the path taken by a member within a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger (1998) identifies five different trajectories through the community of practice. They are:

Inbound trajectory – newcomer with prospect of staying on and becoming a core member.

Insider trajectory – renegotiating identity within a community that allows the member to change, shift their understanding within the community.

Peripheral trajectory - never gaining full participation within the community.

Boundary trajectory – spanning across several different communities of practice at one time, while linking the communities together, such as cross-disciplinary work.

Outbound trajectory – leaving the community for reasons such as retiring or coming of age (Wenger, 1998, pp. 76-7).

Trajectories and participation are linked. Where members are located in a community of practice, whether they are on the periphery, in the core, or outside, is based on their level of participation. Which trajectory they take within a certain community of practice influences their level of participation (Wenger, 1998). An example is how newcomers

might be on an inbound trajectory, and not participating, because they are observing how the members participate with one another. They might be on a peripheral trajectory and do not want to learn how to participate, so they do not participate. But others, perhaps long-standing members in the same community of practice, might not be participating because they are on an outbound trajectory and can no longer participate with the core members because the core members no longer want to participate with them (Wenger, 1998).

These multiple trajectories allow individuals to negotiate their identities regarding whom they interact with, but also when they engage with a certain community. The timing is really important, because Wenger (1998) believes that “our identities incorporate the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present” (p. 155). In other words, how individuals interact among differing communities of practice impacts their identity.

Summary of socially constructed identity

This section presents the social construction of identity, how an individual's identity is constructed through interactions with others (Goffman, 1959). It also presents the Community of Practice model (Wenger, 1998) which deals with the impact participation has on the social construction of identity and how individuals undergo identity change through their membership in particular communities.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss and familiarize the reader with the theoretical framework that supports this study. Within the tourism section, I began with a brief overview of the field of tourism and how researchers define who is a tourist. Then I discussed what has been published about tourism's impact on identity, and women in tourism. In the feminism section I discussed the three waves of feminism and what has been published on women in male-dominated organizations. Finally in the last section, socially constructed identity, I presented the Community of Practice model and the theory that identity is socially constructed.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of qualitative research. I discuss several different approaches to qualitative research and how they influence my data collection and analysis. Next, I present my research design. The discussion on my research design includes the research questions, how I approached my study, selected my participants, and how I collected and analyzed my data. At this end of the chapter, limitations, issues, and dilemmas that I encountered while undertaking this study are presented.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). Its purpose is to “understand human experience to reveal both the processes by which people construct meaning about their worlds and to report what those meanings are” (Creswell, 1998, p. 14).

There are several basic assumptions that help qualitative researchers understand the human experience. The first is that reality is complex, constructed, and ultimately

subjective (Morse, 1994). Unlike researchers using quantitative research methods, qualitative researchers do not assume that there is an objective reality with universal truths that can be discovered through scientific, step-by-step inquiry. Instead, they assume that there are multiple, socially constructed realities (Garman, 1996). In other words, there is no such thing as one reality that we are all a part of. Rather we are constructing how we see the world. This construction changes through the course of our lifetimes due to our interactions with others.

The second assumption of qualitative research is that research is an interpretative process. While analyzing qualitative data researchers attempt to understand the world from the participants' point of view and the meaning they have constructed from their experiences (Morse, 1994). This research is considered interpretative because it focuses on the underlying assumptions that come from the data collected. Qualitative researchers observe, participate, and interview participants while collecting data and deal with their own biases and subjectivities in the process (Merriam, 2002).

Thirdly, research is conducted in the natural setting. Researchers usually examine a small number of sites, situations, or people over an extended period of time (Merriam, 2002), and try to observe "natural" events rather than impose artificial instruments and tests.

Before discussing the different approaches to qualitative research, I think I must be clear in what I mean by the terms methodology and method. Methodology is an organized, coherent set of methods with certain epistemological assumptions that help to guide researchers in the types of methods used (Flick, 2002). Methods are the

techniques and procedures in which researchers use to collect and analyze their data (Flick, 2002).

For my study I used a combined-method approach to model building. For this approach, I used elements of naturalistic inquiry to collect my data and I used elements of grounded theory during my data analysis.

NATURALISTIC INQUIRY

The basic assumptions of naturalistic inquiry are that there are multiple socially constructed realities; total generalization of findings is not possible; everything is related; the study needs to occur within the natural setting; and the researcher is the primary instrument. In the following paragraphs, these five assumptions will be discussed in more detail.

Naturalistic inquiry rejects the notion that there is a single objective reality. The assumption that there are multiple realities enables naturalistic researchers to understand the meanings people have constructed of their reality (Merriam, 1998). By accepting that there is no objective reality, naturalistic inquiry also assumes that total generalization is impossible. It is impossible because without an objective reality that everyone agrees on there can be no way to generalize what happened in one context to what might happen in the next. Instead, findings from a naturalistic inquiry can only be transferable from one setting to another if the settings are similar to one another in multiple ways (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Transferability is possible

because the findings are presented in such a way that they have very general and unclear boundaries (Erlandson et al., 1993):

Rather than attempting to select isolated variables that are equivalent across contexts, the naturalistic researcher attempts to describe in great detail the interrelationships and intricacies of the context being studied. Thus the result is a description that will not be replicated anywhere (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 32).

Naturalistic inquiry also assumes that in order to discover the relationships in the context, the phenomenon should be studied in its natural context instead of a controlled setting (Erlandson et al., 1993). Merriam (1998) suggests that researchers must physically go into the setting to meet the people and observe their behavior. By doing this, researchers are more likely to become “intimately familiar with the phenomenon being studied” (p. 7), which will help researchers to make sense of the data collected.

Observations and interviews are the main ways researchers using naturalistic inquiry to collect their data. Observation, using all five senses, helps the researcher to describe and discover the setting of the phenomena being studied (Erlandson et al., 1993). According to Merriam (1998), we observe things every day of our life, but when we use observation as a tool, it needs to serve a research purpose.

Interviews take on a variety of forms, ranging from structured, predetermined and focused questions, to very unstructured, impromptu and open-ended formats. Patton (1990) believes that the purpose of an interview is to enter another person’s perspective. To do this, most researchers use a semi-structured interview method, allowing exploration of a set of basic questions and issues without predetermined order or

wording of questions. While using this form of interview, the researcher must remember that questions need to be phrased using a vocabulary known to both the researcher and the respondents (Erlandson et al., 1993).

GROUNDING THEORY

The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research describes grounded theory methodology and provides insight into how to build theory out of qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The authors present it as an inductive method of constructing new theories of human actions and experiences of the social world. After writing this book, Strauss teamed up with another researcher, Corbin, and wrote *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. The authors define grounded theory as a “qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 62). The grounded theory approach to research is different from the traditional approaches to scientific inquiry which rely heavily on hypothesis testing and quantitative analysis, and the 1967 publication has become one of the classics of qualitative research.

Before conducting grounded theory, researchers need to review literature relevant to their study and develop skills in effective grounded theory research. This is important because it gives researchers knowledge of prior models that have been used and helps them to make sense of the data (Glaser, 1978). After this, they are ready to conduct their research, which entails three elements: data collection (observation,

conversation and interview); analysis (coding and sorting); and theory formulation. These three elements, as well as the review of literature, are connected through the processes of asking questions to inform and guide analysis (Dey, 1999).

According to Corbin and Strauss (1990) there are four primary requirements of good grounded theory research. It should 1) fit the phenomenon; 2) provide understanding and be understandable; 3) be general, in that the theory includes extensive variation and is abstract enough to be applicable to a wide variety of contexts; and 4) set conditions under which the theory applies (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The researcher's task is to understand what happens in a setting and how the participants manage their roles (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). To do this, they take notes of the comparison they find within the data (the transcripts from the interviews). These notes are then considered the codes, which the researcher creates and/or collects during and after data collection. Because this coding happens at the same time as the data collection, it is difficult to show a clear division between data collection and analysis. While coding the data, the researchers are in the initial phases of constant comparative analysis, but once the data collection has been completed, researchers should review the data to make sure that they still agree with how they coded the data and sorted the codes (Glaser, 1978).

Most researchers use open coding when analyzing their data. This type of coding occurs during the initial process of data gathering. The researchers label incidents or events into codes, then group like codes with each other. These create a category which can be compared with/against other categories (Dey, 1999). Once all of the data have

been reviewed and the researchers can not create any more new categories, the categories are considered saturated.

GENERIC QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

My combined-method approach to model-building is similar to what Merriam (1998) has termed generic qualitative research, which uses methods from grounded theory and/or naturalistic inquiry. Merriam suggests that “researchers who conduct these educational studies simply seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p. 11). To do this, they use the “generic qualitative” (p. 11) method. This method refers to certain characteristics found within all qualitative research: “the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an inductive orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive” (p. 11).

Most qualitative studies within the field of education are generic qualitative research because these studies use observations and interviews as part of the data collection and the findings were a “mix of description and analysis – an analysis that used concepts from the theoretical framework. The analysis usually resulted in the identification of recurring patterns (in the form of categories, factors, variables, themes) that cut through the data or in the delineation of a process” (p. 11). Merriam states that studies using a generic qualitative design could not build theory the same way studies using grounded theory could because they did not follow Strauss and Corbin’s set of

procedures to develop a theory about the phenomenon being studied inductively (Merriam, 1998).

There are certain challenges to conducting qualitative research. These challenges include developing a convincing argument that such a study contributes to theory, research, and/or practice (Flick, 2002). To develop this argument for this study, I knew that I would need to explain qualitative methods I was using and thoroughly discuss my research design (Flick, 2002). In order to deal with these challenges, I relied heavily on naturalistic inquiry and grounded theory methods, and soon realized that I was using a combined method approach.

My combined-method approach relies on the basic assumptions of naturalistic inquiry and its data collection methods, namely observation and interview (Erlandson, et al., 1993). After collecting my data, I used one of the grounded theory methods, constant comparative analysis, to analyze my data (Glaser, 1978). I used the data to create a model.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of the research design section is to present my research questions, discuss how I collected my data, introduce my thirteen participants, discuss the interview process, and finally to present my data analysis (codes and categories). This section also presents how I differentiated between the various communities of practice that the women were participating in and the limitation, issues and dilemmas I faced while conducting this study.

Research questions

In this study, the research questions were:

1. How do American women traveling solo describe the impact solo travel has on their identity?
2. What do they identify as factors contributing to this process?
3. What happens to that identity upon their return?

Data collection

To collect my data, I used a tape recorder to collect my interviews because it increased the accuracy of my data collection and permitted me to have more eye contact with, and be more attentive to, my participants during the interview (Patton, 1990). A copy of the Texas A&M University Internal Review Board (IRB) approval form to study human subjects can be found in Appendix A.

Oran (1998) also suggested that in the field researchers should try to collect as much data as possible about the participants, but to make sure that all data collected is relevant to the study.

From my previous backpacking trip to Europe, I knew that most backpackers spend two to three days in major cities, such as Rome, London, Paris, and Amsterdam. In order for me to come across other women traveling solo whom I could invite to participate I had two options:

1. to spend a few days at several major cities in Europe
2. to spend several weeks in a few major European cities

I chose the second option because I wanted to interview several women and I feared that if I were constantly traveling, I might not come across any potential participants. I spent two weeks traveling through France (Paris and Rennes) and three weeks in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, The Hague, and Noordwijk). The towns and cities that I traveled to and spent time in were not prearranged. I chose these locations by speaking to other backpackers on the road and asking them if and where they had encountered American women backpacking solo.

From my previous traveling experiences in Europe, I knew a lot of backpackers spent time in these cities. By spending five weeks in these cities and towns at backpacker hangouts, such as hostels and tourist attractions, I thought I would definitely be able to interview a large number of American women traveling solo. Before I left for Europe, my doctoral committee and I decided that I needed to collect approximately fifteen interviews in order to ensure saturation of the data.

Upon arrival in Paris, France, I spent time in a hostel near the Eiffel Tower, the Fowl Hostel, that the guidebook described as follows “aimed at young Anglo fun-seekers, the Hostel wants to rock with them at the in-house bar until the 2 am curfew” (Dawid, de la Contrie, & Lytal, 2000, p. 108). What made the Fowl Hostel ideal for my study was that it had a bar and a kitchen where backpackers congregated.

Because this was high season and a lot of people were traveling at the time, the hostel was completely booked. However, they had put a few extra mattresses on the ground and were renting those out, first come first serve. In order for me to get one of these mattresses, I arrived at the hostel at 6:00 am and waited in line with other

backpackers for two hours in the rain. At 8:00 they opened their doors and let our rain-soaked bodies in. Luckily I was second in line and I was assigned a mattress.

Unfortunately the other fifteen backpackers behind me were not as lucky and they were asked to leave and find another hostel.

Participants

During my time at the Fowl Hostel it rained a lot and, since there was no air conditioning, the windows of the room in which I slept were kept open. Needless to say, I slept on a wet mattress for one week along with three other people on the floor, while the other backpackers in the room, sleeping in the ten bunk beds, kept dry. All 23 of us used the same shower, toilet and sink, and became fairly familiar with each other.

It is so loud here at night that I can barely hear myself think. There are so many people and the music is played loud until midnight every night.

The reason that the music is turned off at midnight is that this hostel is in a residential neighborhood and the neighbors have complained about the noise coming from the hostel in the past. But just because the music is off, does not mean that it is quiet. People stay up and talk until daybreak.

The sheer amount of people that are sleeping in the rooms and drinking in the bar and the lack of privacy is unnerving. There are only four toilets in the entire hostel for over 200 backpackers. (Journal entry, July 8, 2001)

Due to this closeness, I was able to ask my roommates if they were solo backpackers or if they knew of anyone women in the hostel who were backpacking solo. To my

surprise they actually started to recruit women and bring them to our room even if they were not traveling solo, but had in the past. It was amazing how everyone helped me out.

During my time at this hostel, I was able to interview four women; none of them were in my room. The first woman I interviewed was Nicolette (pseudonym). She was a 20-year-old German citizen that had grown up in the United States and was presently pursuing a bachelor degree at Cornell University. She was in Paris taking a photography course that summer and trying to find work at the hostel, and after her course ended she was planning to travel for four additional weeks.

Nicolette was white, with dark brown hair, about five feet tall, and a little on the heavy side. Her hair was in tight braids and she wore very hippie-like clothing: loose-fitting, linen, and in various shades of purple and brown. She spoke very softly, acting very shy, and being selective with her wording. Because she was born in Germany and had many family members still living there she had traveled to Europe several times before alone. She had also spent time in Israel visiting family members prior to this trip. She said that her family would be classified as upper middle class in the United States.

I knew that my committee wanted me to interview only American citizens, but Nicolette was an American resident and had a permanent home in the in the United States, where her parents lived. She was also traveling alone for a period longer than four weeks, which was my major requirement, so I decided to interview her.

The next woman I interviewed was Maureen. She was a 23-year-old white American woman from Connecticut. I had met her while standing in line waiting to get

into the hostel; she was in front of me. She was another soft-spoken woman with short light brown hair, but unlike Nicolette, she did not wear hippie-like clothing. She was dressed in a purple sweater and blue jeans with her money pouch visible because it was outside her sweater in plain sight. I could see her passport, her ATM card and several different credit cards.

Maureen had recently graduated with a Bachelor's degree and wanted to travel to Europe before she started working. She had been traveling for seven weeks and had one more week to backpack before returning home. Before this trip, Maureen had never traveled alone internationally. When I asked her about the economic class she grew up in, she said that it was upper-middle-class.

After this interview, I met another white American woman who was traveling solo, Jasper, while preparing dinner for myself in the hostel joint kitchen. After dinner, I interviewed her, and then we went to the section of Paris where the Moulin Rouge, the famous French cabaret located on Boulevard de Clichy, was situated. She was a 28-year-old teacher from Texas. She had a Bachelor's degree in anthropology and a Master's degree in sociology (women's studies) and had chosen the teaching profession because it allowed her to travel during the summers and Christmas break.

Jasper had long blonde hair and was about five feet and six inches. She was dressed in a white knit shirt and wore khaki pants. She spoke very confidently and with a slight Texas drawl. She had just started traveling and had approximately four more weeks of vacation left which she was going to spend traveling through Europe.

Jasper had traveled previously to this trip. She had lived in Mexico for a period of time and spoke fluent Spanish. She had also spent time in different parts of Europe but this was her first trip to France. When I asked her about the economic class she grew up in, she said that it was middle-class.

The last woman I interviewed while in Paris was Jean-Michelle. She was 23 years old, with short curly black hair. She was from Hawaii. She wore a pink blouse, a white skirt and a brimmed hat that covered her eyes. She had a Bachelor's degree and had just completed her first year at law school. She was soft-spoken and paused several times during the interview to take long lingering puffs from her cigarettes. She was traveling for eight weeks and like Jasper, she had just started her trip. She was going to travel through France and Germany.

Jean-Michelle had never traveled abroad solo but had visited Germany with her parents when she was younger. She had made several trips across the United States solo, so she had experienced solo travel before. She said that her brother was traveling solo through Europe at the same time. She had decided not to travel with him, but was in constant e-mail communication with him. When I asked her about her economic class she said that she was upper middle class.

While in the hostel I asked my roommates and other backpackers when I met where they had encountered American women traveling solo and to my surprise a lot of them stated that they had encountered these women in the Brittany region of France. With this information, I booked a train ticket to Rennes to explore the Brittany region and checked into the hostel there to find more American women traveling solo.

This hostel was quite different from the hostel in Paris. It was part of the international youth hostel organization, not privately owned, so there were families with children staying at this hostel. And it was quite uninviting compared to the other hostel – it was stark and barren and resembled a hospital instead of a dormitory. Luckily, Rennes is not as popular as Paris, so I was able to find a room with two bunk beds to sleep in and I did not even have a roommate.

When I arrived, I did not have to wait in line like I did in Paris, which was nice. It was so quiet and clean. It was harder to find than the Fowl Hostel because it was far away from the center of town and in a very residential area. There is a huge lobby with a large cafeteria area where they serve food and drinks at all times of the day. Besides the cafeteria benches, there are a few chairs in the corner, near the back for people to socialize in. The room has two bunk beds and a bathroom with toilet and shower. Meaning that only four people will be using it. YEAH! (Journal entry, July 12, 2001).

That first evening, I met an American woman traveling solo, Anais. She was white and had spent time working in different organic farms in the French countryside and had wanted to learn French. She was from Florida, about five feet four inches tall, and 27 years old. When I asked her about her family's economic classification, she stated that her family was middle class.

Anais had a Bachelor's degree in International Studies, but was unable to find work in the United States that she was truly interested in. Before this trip, she had never

traveled abroad solo. The day after the interview, we traveled to Saint Malo, a walled city along the coast. Anais was the only woman I interviewed here and after a week I returned to Paris, spent two nights at the Fowl Hostel and went to the Netherlands the following day. While at the hostel this second time, I did not meet any other American women traveling solo. The women that I had met the previous week had left.

Arriving in the Netherlands, I traveled to Amsterdam to spend time in a popular youth hostel, the Pigsty Hostel, described in the guidebook as: “a popular choice run by backpackers, with comfortable rooms and rock music downstairs” (ver Berkmoes & Gray, 2001, p. 140). What made this hostel ideal for my study was that it had a bar downstairs where backpackers who were staying at the hostel spent their time.

I did not find the hostel until 7:35 am, by then there was a pretty long line.

At 8:30 they opened their doors and most of us got in. I am in a room with 14 women, so I think my chances of meeting women traveling solo will be greater. There was a huge open area in front of the hostel where there were pillows on the floor for people to nap and hang out in. There was also a full service bar and two pool tables in this area. The only way to get into this area was to pass through two secured doors that were monitored 24 hours a day by a security guard. They have the tightest security system I have seen so far during this trip. (Journal entry, July 18, 2001).

I interviewed five American women who were staying at this hostel, two of them on the first day I was there. The first woman I interviewed was a young woman, Jesse, who

was white and on summer break away from college where she was pursuing a Bachelor's degree in management. She was from Indiana and was spending time traveling through Europe for eight and a half weeks. She was half-way through her trip when I came across her. She had spent a lot of time in Germany visiting her sister. Jesse had come to Europe previously to spend time with her sister and had traveled through Europe with her family when she was younger, but had never traveled by herself for an extended period of time. When I asked her about her family's economic status, she said that her family was middle class.

The next woman I interviewed, Katie, was also on summer break, away from her university where she was pursuing a Bachelor's degree in ethnic studies and communication. She was white and had long ash blonde colored hair. She was at the end of her trip and had been having a great time traveling solo for the first time. She said that her father had given her the ticket by using his frequent flier miles. She had traveled through Spain, Italy, Germany, England, France, Switzerland, and finally the Netherlands. She was flying out of Amsterdam. Katie had never been in Europe before this trip and had never traveled alone. During this trip she had spent time in Spain, Italy, Germany, France and the Netherlands. When asked about her family's economic class, she said that she grew up middle class.

On the second day I was at this hostel, I met Naomi, a white woman who was staying in the same room as I was. She had been traveling solo for one month before meeting up with a friend from home. When I met her, she was traveling with her friend for two weeks. After this time, she would continue to travel solo after her friend

returned home for six more weeks. She was of Russian descent and had shoulder length dark brown hair. Naomi was from New York and had recently graduated college with a business degree and had a job waiting for her upon her return back to the United States.

The following day I met yet another American woman traveling solo. Strawberry had just arrived in Amsterdam after spending a week in England. She was on her way to Paris to enroll in a fashion design class. She was white and 26 years old. She had a Bachelor's degree in marine biology and had just left her job in Maryland to travel to Europe for a month. She said that her family would be categorized as middle class.

Strawberry did not know if she was going to stay longer than a month, but she was not going to worry about it until she had found a fashion design class to participate in. She had never been to Europe before and was planning to travel to Germany and France after spending time in the Netherlands.

The following day, my fourth day at the hostel, I met yet another white American woman traveling solo, Wandering Girl. Wandering Girl was the oldest woman I interviewed; she was 35 years old and had both a Bachelor and Master's degree in chemical engineering. However, she was also a licensed massage therapist and worked out of her home. To come on this trip, she had rented her house out for a year and was on her way to Thailand when I met her. She had just started her trip.

Wandering Girl had traveled to Europe and Latin America by herself and had traveled throughout the United States on several trips alone. She was planning this trip according to the different types of European currency that her clients had given her because it was the summer before the Euro was introduced as currency. Her clients who

knew they would not be returning to Europe until after the Euro conversion donated their European currency to her trip. When I asked her about the economic class she grew up in, she stated that it was middle class.

I did not meet any more American women traveling solo while at the hostel. I was told by other backpackers and those that worked in the hostel that in another city, Noordwijk, there was another hostel owned by the same owner that a lot of Americans went to after spending a week at the Pigsty Hostel. With this information, I made a reservation at this hostel and booked a train ticket to the coast.

When I arrived at this hostel, it reminded me a lot of the hostel I had spent time in Rennes because it was in a residential area, not in the center of town like the Pigsty Hostel. But that is where the similarity ended. As I passed through the bamboo strands, I came into a small lobby with a few tables and chairs and a full service bar, specializing in Pina Coladas.

Things are a bit tight here – there isn't as much space to move around compared to the other hostel in Amsterdam. I am now in a room with ten bunk beds, every one full and with sand covering the floor. Guys and girls are mixed, like the hostel was in Paris. (Journal entry, July 26, 2001)

While here, I interviewed two more women. Both of these women were temporarily working at the hostel for free room and board. The first woman, Nomad, I interviewed, Nomad, was 23 years old and had spent time in Egypt as a scuba-diving instructor. She was on her way to Spain to spend time with her boyfriend when she sprained her knee

near Noordwijk and needed to rest and recover. Nomad had a Bachelor's degree in journalism and was from Wisconsin. She said that her family was upper-middle class.

Nomad had shoulder length blonde hair, which, as I found out later, was originally brown. She said that she had always had brown hair until spending so much time in the sun and sea. Suddenly having blonde hair had affected the way she perceived herself because she felt more men were paying attention to her with their whistles and offensive comments. She had previously been abroad while pursuing her undergraduate degree. She had spent a year in Germany.

The second woman I interviewed, Vegan, was spending time working at the hostel after spending time in Thailand. She was five feet five inches with short brown hair and had been traveling for three months. Vegan was the only woman I interviewed who did not have or was not pursuing a Bachelor's degree. She was a licensed massage therapist and worked in Seattle to save money for her travel. She was 22 years old and grew up middle class. Vegan had traveled to Europe solo previously and had actually worked at this hostel during her previous trip.

After spending a week in Noordwijk, I was in The Hague on my last night in Europe when I met another woman traveling by herself who was Canadian-born, but an American resident. She was white with long brown wavy hair and dressed in a short black loose-fitting dress with white flowers on it. Alice had spent one month in Spain salsa dancing and was on her way back to the United States – she was flying out of Amsterdam and spending her last night in the Netherlands with a friend. She was 28

years old and had a Bachelor's degree in international studies. She grew up middle class. After completing this interview, I had a total of thirteen interviews.

As mentioned previously, I had wanted to collect fifteen interviews. Though I was only able to interview thirteen women, analysis suggests I did reach saturation regarding my research questions with these thirteen women.

Ten months after conducting these initial interviews, I contacted all thirteen women to see if they were willing to do a follow up interview and six agreed to participate in subsequent interviews. Since I could not travel to them, I requested their home telephone numbers and set up times to conduct telephone interviews with them. These interviews lasted approximately one hour. In these subsequent interviews, I was able to expand on my original categories by asking them questions directed at the categories.

In all, my research participants consisted of thirteen women between the ages of 19-35, who were traveling by themselves in Europe for four weeks or more. Individuals traveling for more than one month are considered long-term travelers traveling in Cohen's experiential and experimental mode (Riley, 1988).

The participants' pseudonyms, citizenship, age, education level and length of travel experience are summarized in Table 1. This table presents the range of ages I interviewed and how similar these women were in terms of education level.

Table 1
Synopsis of Research Participants

Name	Citizenship	Age	Educational level	Length of Travel
Nicolette	German	20	Pursuing Bachelor's degree	8 weeks
Maureen	American	23	Holds Bachelor's degree	8 weeks
Jasper	American	28	Holds Bachelor's degree Holds Master's degree	4 weeks
Jean-Michelle	American	23	Holds Bachelor's degree Pursuing Law degree	8 weeks
Anais	American	27	Holds Bachelor's degree	12 weeks
Jesse	American	21	Holds Bachelor's degree Pursuing Master's degree	8 weeks
Katie	American	19	Pursuing Bachelor's degree	4 weeks
Naomi	American	22	Holds Bachelor's degree	12 weeks
Strawberry	American	26	Holds Bachelor's degree	4 weeks
Wandering Girl	American	35	Holds Bachelor's degree Holds Master's degree Licensed Message Therapist	52 weeks
Nomad	American	23	Holds Bachelor's degree	12 weeks
Vegan	American	22	Licensed Message Therapist	12 weeks
Alice	Canadian	28	Holds Bachelor's degree	12 weeks

Interview Process

Once the potential participants had agreed to the interview, we scheduled a time and a place to talk later that day or the following day. These interviews lasted 30 to 120 minutes and were usually conducted in a quiet area of the hostel, such as the hostel's common area, my or her hostel room, or a bench outside the hostel, to make sure they were free from interruptions.

The amount of contact time I had with each of the participants and the dates and lengths of interviews 1, 2, and 3 are summarized in Table 2. This table presents the length of the interviews I conducted with each.

Table 2**Synopsis of Contact and Interview Times with Participants**

Name	Contact Time	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Nicolette	10 hours	July 04, 2001 45 minutes		
Maureen	5 hours	July 05, 2001 43 minutes		
Jasper	15 hours	July 05, 2001 61 minutes	September 23, 2002 49 minutes	October 30, 2002 32 minutes
Jean-Michelle	2 hours	July 06, 2001 42 minutes		
Anais	20 hours	July 11, 2001 98 minutes	June 29, 2002 39 minutes	November 12, 2002 43 minutes
Jesse	16 hours	July 18, 2001 51 minutes		
Katie	17 hours	July 18, 2001 73 minutes	July 09, 2002 41 minutes	October 20, 2002 54 minutes
Naomi	10 hours	July 19, 2001 72 minutes	July 01, 2002 38 minutes	November 12, 2002 35 minutes
Strawberry	3 hours	July 20, 2001 45 minutes		
Wandering Girl	25 hours	July 19, 2001 105 minutes		
Nomad	32 hours	July 25, 2001 92 minutes	June 27, 2002 60 minutes	September 29, 2002 32 minutes
Vegan	15 hours	July 26, 2001 41 minutes	July 11, 2002 41 minutes	November 10, 2002 27 minutes
Alice	6 hours	July 30, 2001 115 minutes		

Each interview was audio-taped and then the tape was sent by registered mail to a contact in the Netherlands so that if my backpack was stolen these tapes would not be lost. At the end of the interviews, I asked the women for contact information so I could contact them once they got back into the United States and conduct follow-up interviews. Each woman agreed and gave me her e-mail address since some of them did not know where they would be in three months. A copy of the questions I asked the

women during this first interview can be found in Appendix B. There was no set order in which the questions were asked during the interviews.

If at any time the participant wanted to end the interview or wished the tape recorder turned off, I did. One of the women asked me to turn off the tape recorder while she was discussing her family. I kept the lines of communication open after the interview with e-mails and a follow-up interview that allowed them the opportunity to disagree or agree with my findings and the opportunity to no longer be a part of the study.

After conducting these first interviews, I usually spent time with the women just “hanging out”. Besides what they had to tell me during the interviews, I wanted to get a sense of what it was like to travel alone as a woman. I acted as a participant-observer, informally chatting with these women and actively participating in short excursions with them (Davies, 1999). I spent time with them as we visited recommended tourist sites such as museums, parks, historic buildings, pubs, coffee shops, and city-markets. Participant-observation allowed me first-hand experience of what these women encounter while traveling and how these women interacted with me and with the other backpackers.

I collected my observations in a journal. These observations included:

- detailed descriptions of the hostels where I stayed
- detailed descriptions of backpacker hangouts I spent time in
- interactions of the women I interviewed with other backpackers
- interactions backpackers had with each other

To ensure confidentiality, I asked each participant what name she would like to have as a pseudonym. The tapes were labeled with the pseudonym and the date of the interview, mailed to a contact in the Netherlands who placed them in a locked file box. Only the consent forms had the real names of the participants.

Data Analysis

During the fall of 2001 and spring of 2002, I analyzed the interviews I collected. After collecting the data, I had to analyze piles of data collected from interviews and observations I made while in the field. To do this, I read through the transcripts twice before coding them. To code them I summarized statements that my participants made in one- or two-word codes. I grouped similar codes together to create categories. Ultimately it was my hope to develop new perspectives by merging my findings with the theoretical framework. The outcome will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Codes and categories

After conducting the first round of interviews, I coded the transcripts. In this initial coding I came up with over 200 codes. I then went through and re-coded the transcripts. This time I had 203 codes. Examples of these codes included:

- Travel can be dangerous
- Self-confident
- Coping with loneliness
- Doubt

- Feeling powerful

With the subsequent interviews, the second and third interviews, I used the codes that I had created during the first coding. But I also added to these codes. In total, after all three rounds of interviews had been coded, I had a total of 257 codes. A copy of the questions I asked the women during the subsequent interviews can be found in Appendix C. There was no set order in which the questions were asked during the interviews.

I created categories from these codes by grouping the codes that were similar with each other together. For example, the codes “powerful” and “self-confident” were categorized in the confidence category because they both dealt with how the women felt in control of their travel experience. Several of the 257 codes went into each of the categories. In total I had 20 categories. Each category was created from numerous codes dealing with how the women saw themselves within the backpacker community of practice. Examples of these categories included:

- Cultural exposure
- Choices
- Confidence
- Gender
- Learning experiences

After creating these categories, I began to group them into similar groups, much like I did with the codes. From this grouping of categories, I was able to create three themes. A copy of the codes, categories and themes I interpreted from the data can be found in Appendix D. However, I soon began to realize that these themes did not

answer my research questions directly and I needed an alternative way to discuss the themes and their relevance to my study. I came to call them components, because when put together the three components represent the women's feelings of what it was like to be a solo traveler. I will discuss these components in Chapter Four.

Creation of home community of practice and backpacker community of practice

Communities of practice can be thought of as groups of people that share common goals and interests and use common practices, such as language, to attain these goals. Through their participation with each other, they come to share similar beliefs and value systems (Wenger, 1998). The examples I used to describe mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire come from my interviews with my participants and my own experiences within the communities.

When using the community of practice model to explain identity, Wenger (1998) relies on the idea that individuals are constantly participating in various communities of practice at one time. How they interact within each community of practice influences their identity. In this study I was able to observe and interview women as they were participating within the backpacker community of practice, and through subsequent interviews, understand their home community of practice.

Even though the backpacker community is very fluid, with individuals (members) constantly entering and leaving it and no specific location, it appears to have the attributes needed to create a community of practice. Backpackers have mutual engagement through their interactions with one another at local backpacker hangouts,

such as hostels, coffee shops, clubs, and restaurants. While at these hangouts, backpackers exchange stories of where they have been, what they have seen, and about their life back home (be it the United States, Canada, or Israel). They also find out what other spots backpackers go to in other parts of the city, country and continent. It is through this mutual engagement that individuals tighten their relations with others in the backpacker community of practice and establish their identities within it.

Joint enterprise is established in the backpacker community of practice due to the common purpose that binds the members together – to travel around a certain country(ies) and/or continent(s) with all of their possessions in a large backpack, to meet new people, and to experience things that they have not been able to at home. Members in the backpacker community of practice understand the goals of the community and what it means to be a member of the community.

The shared repertoire of the backpacker community of practice refers to those things members do such as traveling with a backpack and staying away from tourist sites, opting instead for interaction with people from the local culture. It also includes the artifacts the backpackers have and how they present themselves. Usually they have one large backpack and a smaller pack that they take with them on day trips. One or both of these backpacks have patches on them from the countries that the backpacker has traveled through. They also usually wear one necklace that they feel identifies them throughout their trip, whether they are male or female. And increasingly, backpackers have started to have dreadlocks in their hair.

Some of the practices of this community include:

- Using guide books to learn about the culture, language and climate of the countries they are traveling through. Most backpackers use *Lonely planet* and *Rough guides* (Patterson, 2000)
- Viewing themselves as travelers instead of tourists because they want to have an individualized experience that they have created through their interactions with other backpackers, but more importantly with the local communities to encounter the authentic culture (Patterson, 2000)
- Having few possessions in their backpacks; the lighter the backpack, the easier it is to travel with (Dawid et al., 2000)
- Visiting natural locations that offer unique experiences that are authentic, interactive and educational and traveling on a tight budget to where it is almost a game how much money is needed through the course of a day (Riley, 1988)

Contrasting these characteristics of the backpacker community of practice to the home community of practice shows how different the two communities are. The home community of practice is made up of family and friends. According to Wenger (1998), becoming a member of a community of practice is voluntary and individuals are not born into a certain community, but for the purpose of this study, family and friends are considered the home community of practice because they have several of the characteristics that are important.

Mutual engagement within the home community is formed when individuals get together and engage in practices that are common to the community. An example of this

in the home community might be interacting in a social organization, such as women that get their hair done every week at the same salon, but have started meeting more frequently to discuss matters that are import and to them. By discussing these matters, the members of the community are able to tighten their interpersonal relationships and to establish their identities.

Joint enterprise is created when the members of a community accomplish certain goals, such as raising AIDS/HIV awareness and women's reproductive rights, in their area. The members mutually create these goals and obtain them together. But to create these goals, the members of the community need to create shared repertoire with one another in the community. This shared repertoire includes the ways that members interact with one another and the methods, tools, and behavior patterns they use to accomplish their goals. Examples of shared repertoire among the social organization would be the language that they use, how they dress, and the way they behave towards one another.

LIMITATIONS, ISSUES, AND DILEMMAS

In order to obtain these women's trust, I needed to become an insider, a backpacker. On several occasions, before the interview, when I was first speaking to these women, they asked me if I was also traveling solo for longer than four weeks. I answered, "Yes" and they seemed to respect that because they knew that I could relate to their experiences. Three of the women I interviewed said that other individuals had interviewed them while they had been traveling, but those interviewers were not

traveling solo for an extended period of time. When I asked what they thought about being interviewed by someone not experiencing solo travel, several claimed that they had not been as open to these interviewers as they had with me because they could not relate to them.

But the openness that I had with the women came at a price. There were several problems I faced while being immersed within the backpacker culture. At times I felt like I was being too much of a researcher because I knew before I went into the field that I had to differentiate myself from my participants as not to compromise the aims of my study or my integrity as a researcher (Cassell, 1977; Davies, 1999). However, on some days I felt that I was missing something. I was in the backpacker community, but I did not feel a part of it because I was not really fully participating in it. I was not traveling to places with other backpackers that I had met or because I wanted to experience something I had heard about through the backpacker grapevine. Instead I traveled to places which I thought would have a high number of solo women backpackers.

Moreover, while conducting these interviews, I was constantly aware that these participants were stakeholders in this research. They were aware how this traveling experience had changed their lives and wanted to know how it changed the lives of other women. Because of their stake in the research they should have “shared constructions to which the separate constructions have contributed” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 151). To do this, I asked the women to discuss what meanings they had created about themselves and others during the course of their trip or afterwards.

There are several more important limitations to this study. One of the limitations has to do with socio-economic status: all women I interviewed considered themselves middle class or above. A second limitation was education: they all had at least a high school diploma and some were pursuing graduate degrees. A third limitation was nationality: eleven of the women were American citizens and the two that were not were American residents. The last limitation to this study was race: all of the women I interviewed were white.

CONCLUSION

Using different qualitative methods, I developed a research design that allowed me to create research questions, create a research plan to collect data, and to analyze data that helped me fulfill the purpose of this study, to understand how women experience solo travel and what impact that experience has on their identity. However, with this research design, I encountered limitations, issues, and dilemmas that I have identified.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present the findings from my data analysis. The components that emerged from the data were agency (self-confidence, acceptable risks, feeling American, and freedom), loneliness, and body. I also present what the women I interviewed plan on doing in the future.

COMPONENTS

When individuals are on an inbound trajectory in a certain community of practice, they are learning how to participate in the community. They are learning the community's forms of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. While learning these things, they are establishing themselves as individuals who want to become core members.

Each community of practice has its own forms of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, and the time it takes an individual to learn them is different. Some might learn how to interact with the community (mutual engagement) within a week, but not know the procedures and techniques (shared repertoire) until they have interacted with community members for a year. An example of this might be a group of young people that play basketball every Sunday afternoon. A newcomer might learn how to play and how to interact with the other players, but the newcomer has not

been around long enough to know the drills, game plans, and the code words used on the court. The newcomer must learn these things to gain greater access into this community of practice. When an individual has successfully learned the community's mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire they have crossed over from an inbound trajectory to an insider trajectory (Wenger, 1998).

During data analysis I noticed the themes that I had created from the categories were actually components of what it was like to be a solo traveler. The women had demonstrated through their interviews that these components had helped them to move from the inbound trajectory to the insider trajectory over the course of their trips.

The three components were:

- Agency
- Loneliness
- Body

In the following section, I discuss the components in greater detail. The agency component is broken into four distinctive parts, each dealing with a different awareness. They are: self-confidence, acceptable risks, feeling American, and freedom.

AGENCY

“I have become a lot more independent and a lot more confident and a lot happier inside”

(Jesse, July 18, 2001)

When individuals are aware that they are constructing their identity and that they can create multiple identities, they have agency. Giddens (1991) sees agency as what individuals actually do in a situation that has visible consequences. These actions are images of a previously planned sequence of actions that the individuals think even before the action has occurred (Bradley, 2002).

There are social pressures that motivate individuals to act a certain way that they do not perceive and most of this motivation is unconscious (Giddens, 1991). Individuals monitor their environment by using their knowledge and language skills in order to sustain certain routines.

In this section I present how the travel-related experiences of the women I interviewed informed their agency. The interviews gave them an opportunity to reflect on who they had been before their travel experiences and who they had become when they returned. The realization that they had changed and that their desires were no longer congruent with their home community helped to create a new sense of agency. There were four manifestations of changed behavior: self-confidence, acceptable risks, feeling American, and freedom.

Self-confidence

The women used a variety of different words to describe how they felt this experience had changed their lives. Some used “empowering”, some used “confident”, while others said that after this experience they felt that they could do anything. I grouped all of these types of words under self-confidence because they all referred to the

same idea of feeling an increase in confidence to do things and accomplish tasks, but using different words. When using this word, I am not referring to these women's emotional or psychological relationships to others that might increase their internal locus of self-confidence. These women said that their experiences had given them a chance to exercise the confidence that they knew was inside them but they had been unable to exercise in their home community.

During my first round of interviews, my interview guide dealt mostly with issues of experiential learning. When I asked the women what they had learned from their travel experiences, most stated they had learned to depend on themselves. There was no one to catch them if they fell, no one to make sure that everything was going to be okay. "The confidence that I got from here was just being independent and having no one around to take care of me" (Katie, July 18, 2001).

Nomad had just arrived to the Netherlands from Egypt, where she had spent three months as a scuba instructor. I met her in a hostel in Holland. She said, "You learn so much about yourself. What you can really handle." Another participant I met in the Netherlands, Katie, was on her way back home after traveling through Europe alone for four weeks.

I mean my self-worth has gone up so much on this trip because just knowing my worth. Knowing that I am, I can go, I can just be alone. I don't need someone to pick me up and carry me through this trip. That I can do it on my own and be fine (Katie, July 18, 2001).

This outlook, which I interpreted to mean “I can do it”, was prevalent through the first round of interviews. They were not able to depend on their families as they did while at home. One participant I met during my first week in France, Nicolette, also believed that being away from home had increased her self-confidence.

By nature I am very dependent on my family and they always help me figure out who I am. But being on this trip gives me the opportunity to do it by myself. Especially now because my family is going through a little bit of trouble and I needed to get away from there and not always be under their influence. I need to figure out what is good for me. What I want to do, what I want to learn, what I want to be. And not what they want me to be. Not what they expect me to be, what they desire me to be. Just completely my own me (Nicolette, July 7, 2001).

During subsequent interviews, when I asked each of the women how solo travel had had an impact upon the way they saw themselves, they all said that it had changed their lives. All six of the women said that the experience had changed how they see others and how they see themselves in comparison to other Americans and people from abroad.

Nomad returned from Holland to work as an editor in New York and said that traveling solo had had a great impact upon her. She felt different since being back from her trip.

I would have to make decisions. What am I going to do, where am I going to go? How am I going to shape this journey or am I just going to take it along as it goes? It gave me a chance to make those choices, first

of all. Because you have to make them. And then, after you make those choices, you have to weigh were they good ones, am I going to alter this plan? And all through that process you are just finding out what you need from yourself, from other people. After seeing what I did and the choices I made, I felt so much stronger in myself because I knew I could make them. I don't feel like I am dependent on someone. Of course you are dependent on some things. But I don't feel dependent. I don't feel like I need to be with people all the time, and that translates into my daily life. Just that I need some alone time. And it translates into the bigger scheme in that I don't need to be hinged to anyone. I feel differently, I feel stronger and more confident (Nomad, September 29, 2002).

After returning from Europe, Jasper said that travelling solo had strengthened her self-confidence.

I think travel helps you see yourself as very capable. I knew before I traveled I had confidence, but it wasn't until after you traveled alone that you feel truly capable of yourself in many situations. (Jasper, October 30, 2002)

In these subsequent interviews, the women stressed how important their solo travel experience had been for them, and how much it had changed their lives in the way they felt about themselves. They felt confident in their capabilities in a way they never had in their home communities.

Acceptable Risks

This feeling of self-confidence did not come without drawbacks. Solo travelers have to be aware of their surroundings at all times due to the risks involved with this form of traveling. These dangers include theft, assault and, for the women, rape (Wingler, 1996). All of the women I interviewed acknowledged these risks and several had dealt with theft during their trip. The women whose possessions had been stolen felt as if they had been assaulted – that in one moment they went from invincible to helpless. One strategy to deal with this feeling of helplessness was to view the thefts as lessons on how quickly confidence can be lost.

Alice, interviewed in Holland, had spent a month in Spain, and had been robbed twice. She said the first time she was robbed was a horrible experience because she had never thought it could happen to her. But the second time it happened it was not as horrible because she had accepted the risk of being robbed as one of the risks that came with traveling.

A: I sort of felt like I was traveling almost with my own special lights or something like that, you know, that these things couldn't happen to me. And then to actually be robbed was kind of. It felt like a bit of a wrong. This particular person who robbed me, he took my money, my cards. The worse part was not what I lost, but not feeling so invincible. And also feeling like I thought he was trying to help me and he was tricking

me. It's amazing to me that I went home and I sobbed for like 2 hours. And it surprised me. I was really upset about that. I did feel violated.

L: Were there any other robberies?

A: Yeah. Well, actually I was robbed twice in Barcelona. The second time, my roommate and I were in a car and driving and we stopped at a stop light and three men came up to the car and opened the doors and started taking things out of the car while we were in it, but they didn't get anything. So, when traveling you need to take risks. And maybe something horrible could happen. So what I'm trying to look at it being robbed a couple of times is an easy way to realize that I'm not invincible. I was not in any physical danger at any time (Alice, July 30, 2001).

Alice mentioned how wrong it was for her to be robbed, but later on in this same conversation she mentions how brave she felt when she was robbed, suggesting that being aware of, and accepting, the risk of robbery can lead to increased confidence.

Another woman, Naomi, whom I met while in Holland, was in the middle of her trip through Europe. To minimize the risk of traveling alone, she made sure that she looked people in the eyes. She saw this as a major deterrent to theft, but had also decided that her material possessions were not important.

Make sure people know you are aware. They won't touch you. If you look them straight in the eyes, I have noticed this – If you look at them like you know what you are doing and what they are up to. They will leave you alone. They get all freaked out if by people recognizing them. Usually they come up to you on the side. If you have your head down and just watching the floor they know that you are not really aware of anything. Just be aware (Naomi, July 19, 2001).

But one of the women I interviewed, Maureen, did not feel more confident after she was robbed. She had been traveling for seven weeks when I met her in France and she was on her way back home. While in Rome, four weeks earlier, she had had her ATM card stolen from her by what she described as a group of “gypsies:”

Yea, I had my pouch stolen when I was in Rome. What ended up happening was that they started grabbing at me and they managed to grab my ATM card without me noticing it and then I walked away. And like not even a minute later and I realized it was gone by then, they were all gone. They did it because I was alone and I was a woman. Although I'm sure they might try the same thing on a man, because it wasn't about overpowering me, it was about distracting me while all my stuff was on the ground. So, I think it was a combination of all those things. And as harmless as it may seem that they just grabbed me a little, and they got my ATM card, its, you are being violated. And you feel foolish. They just totally threw me off my game. I was just so confused. I just couldn't

believe that they started grabbing me, that they were touching me. It was like, it was just such a violation and you just get so angry because you think if only I had stayed there, if only. Then you think about what you would have done when you realized it and you wanted to like. I think about it when I wished I had checked and realized, I would have grabbed one of them. I would have done anything to shake, punch, like claw that card out of one of their hands. I would have done anything physical to them to get that out of their grasp. But I mean I was that angry. In my mind I am in that anger and I am basically pushing them down in the streets (Maureen, July 5, 2001).

However, after this comment, I asked Maureen what she had learned from this trip. Her response was like many of the other women's.

I've learned that I can stick through stuff. I definitely called my mom crying at least two or three times. Each time that I would talk to her, she's like, "You know, if you want to come home, nobody is going to think any less of you. We won't be angry. If you're really having that bad of a time, just come home." And I didn't because I knew that I would regret not seeing things that I hadn't seen yet. So, I learned that I can make it through something like that. I mean that I can do these things alone (Maureen, July 5, 2001).

Acknowledging the risks was an important subject for the women when discussing self-confidence and their travel experiences.

Jesse, a woman I interviewed while in Holland who was in the middle of her four-week trip, said that traveling had made her more confident, and that others, regardless of age or sex, should do it.

This whole interview has made me think a lot because just like the questions, I like talking about my trip and a lot of times I feel in a way selfish and closed-minded because I want to talk about my trip, how incredible it is and want to share it. And it has made me think a lot. It has made me realize that I have become a lot more independent and a lot more confident and a lot happier inside. And when I go back home, I will be more able to do things on my own. My new self-confidence level is amazing. This is definitely worth doing alone and being independent. If you are a girl, guy, 19 or 25, or 35. It's great. Everyone should do it at least once. So, it was definitely worth it (Jesse, July 18, 2001).

The women, acknowledging risk as one of the factors of solo travel, also acknowledged that there were many rewards of traveling solo that outweighed risk. Acceptance of risks altered the way in which the women saw themselves and interacted with others in a way they would not have been able to at home.

Feeling American

While traveling abroad the women experienced a different perception of their self-confidence and what they believed to be acceptable risks. In addition they altered

how they saw themselves as Americans, as shown by the reluctance of these American women to associate with other Americans.

Riley (1988) mentions that a major reason individuals choose to budget-travel is to meet people. Nomad wanted to meet people, but she wanted to meet people other than Americans. Prior to her trip to Holland, she had lived in Germany for a year.

I had already learned German and I spoke proficiently, but I knew that I would never learn to speak proper German in the states. I also wanted more a living experience in Germany. I didn't want to meet other Americans. I'm like "I'm going to make German friends," and it was really hard. So I broke down and met Americans, but I met Germans as well, which was good. Because I wanted something different (Nomad, July 25, 2001).

Wanting "something different" was also why Wandering Girl went abroad. She wanted the opportunity to meet people who were not Americans and claimed that was the best part of traveling alone.

The opportunities of meeting other travelers, I mean besides Americans, but a lot of other European countries is higher staying at a hostel. It is the opportunity to meet other people that are traveling from other countries, which is the fun part. The best part actually (Wandering Girl, July 21, 2001).

Jean-Michelle also wanted to meet locals – she was interested in what the people of the country she was visiting did.

I wanted to know what the French people are doing. Cause I live in America. I don't need to know. I know there are a lot of friendly kids out there. Definitely, but I don't know what French people are like (Jean-Michelle, July 6, 2001).

But meeting people was not the only the only reason these women were traveling. They were here to see things. Maureen, even while describing how unhappy she had been while on her trip, did not want to go home because of what she had not yet seen.

Even when I was a month into it, and I already seen so much, and I was so miserable, I still knew there was so much that I hadn't seen. And that one day I would look back and be like you should've just stayed (Maureen, July 5, 2001).

These women stated that their self-confidence had risen by meeting people from other countries and seeing foreign things.

I know very rudimentary Spanish, so in Spain, I tried a little bit with you know. Most the time though I'd be like "Excuse me, do you speak English?" And you know if they did, they would say yes or a little. It's just hard to say because you can never know what a person is thinking. I mean they might be thinking, "Oh my God a stupid American, get out of my country. I hate that you are all here all the time" (Maureen, July 5, 2001).

It was common for the women to say that when faced with unfamiliar circumstances they chose to stay quiet and not let their accent give them away. They did not want to

bring attention to the fact that they were Americans. They wanted to be treated as foreigners from an unknown country, but not the United States. However, while in tourist areas, Maureen believed that it was okay to speak English, because that was the universal language among tourists.

While traveling I feel embarrassed sometimes when I just automatically start speaking English. Because they might be thinking “Who the hell do you think you are that you’re speaking English and you automatically expect me to understand you?” And it’s not that, it’s just I have no other alternative. It is the absolute only language that I speak. I actually try to avoid speaking all together. Like in restaurants or little pastry shops, I point instead of asking a lot of times. Although I don’t feel bad about speaking English in train stations or anything like that. That’s just goes with the territory because that is where travelers go and they can usually speak English (Maureen, July 5, 2001).

In subsequent interviews, I asked the women what it was like to be back home. Naomi described what it was like to be back in the American society.

I do feel different than the average female American who has never traveled. But a lot of the times, when I tell them what I do are just amazed. But you know we, men and women, have the same characteristics inside, we are still people. I can take care of myself, and I think that a lot of the women were surprised that I was by myself and I wasn't freaking out (Naomi, July 1, 2002).

Naomi's experiences while traveling solo altered how she perceived herself and others. The other five women I interviewed upon their return home also felt that they were not as American as they had been and that they no longer fit in to the American way of life, i.e., their home community of practice.

Freedom

No longer seeing themselves as typical Americans, the women did not act like other Americans. They emphasized how freeing it was to travel without a companion. When I asked Strawberry, whom I met in Holland, why she decided to travel alone she said:

Cause I don't want to have to answer to anybody. I don't want to have to. I want to do what I want to do. Everything's on my agenda. I know that if I had brought a friend, nobody was going to want to sit at a museum with me for six hours. Like that would be a total drag for them. I decided it was best to be alone (Strawberry, July 20, 2001).

Another woman interviewed in Holland, Wandering Girl, said that she had traveled with friends and that she could meet other travelers more easily when alone.

It's easier to travel alone. I've done a couple of travels, like last spring when I went to Ireland, a girlfriend flew into Shannon and I hung out with her for 2 weeks when I was in Ireland and I was so glad to get rid of her. I'm more of a budget-oriented and yeah I could probably stay in a five-

star hotel, but why? I mean I'm just going to sleep there. It's no different than sleeping here (Wandering Girl, July, 21, 2001).

Some of these women wanted to be free of what people from their home communities thought of them by traveling alone in Europe for a period longer than four weeks.

So if you are alone you can break all norms all rules and just be really yourself. Whereas if there is someone that knows you, you think that I can't do this because he is going to think that that I'm this and this. Or I can't do that because these people are going to get the wrong perception of me when I come back to school they are going to think that and that. And it's just so relaxing when you don't have to think about that crap (Nicolette, July 4, 2001).

Regardless of why these women decided to travel alone, all of the women I met who were traveling alone abroad for the first time stated that they had gained a sense of personal freedom that they had not anticipated prior to their trip. During their travel they were all willing to meet up with other travelers and go places, but they were free to leave when they wanted and did not feel confined by this type of traveling. Jesse said that while traveling alone, she was able to meet and talk to other travelers, but at the same time be free to leave and go to another city without them.

I've met some amazing people just from all over the world. I guess that is the best thing about traveling alone because people just come up to you. Or you can go up to someone and talk to them very freely. For the

most part everyone is open-minded, and you can just pick up and go to another city, if you want (Jesse, July 18, 2001) .

But the open-minded people Jesse discussed were the other backpackers she was interacting with at the hostels and backpacker hangouts. Other individuals, such as family members or individuals from the host countries were sometimes not as open-minded about women traveling solo. Naomi discussed the number of people who were shocked that she was traveling without company.

Everyone wanted to talk to me to find out why I was traveling by myself and if I like it and if I was scared. And “Oh my god. You are a woman. How can you do it?” And it was just shocking that so many people were shocked that I was by myself (Naomi, July 19, 2001).

Having to deal with others’ questions about their form of travel took its toll as they started to question whether or not they were social deviants for traveling alone abroad. Several of the women were approached by strangers and asked where their travel partner was. When they replied that they were traveling alone, the strangers expressed their concern for the women’s safety. They were lone travelers who many thought should not be alone. Naomi said that while she was planning her trip her mother did not want her traveling alone.

When I was planning, I was like “I am going to be by myself.” And my mom was like “please don’t be by yourself. Whatever you do, please don’t be by yourself.” I was like “I am going to be by myself” (Naomi, July 19, 2001).

When asked if people were shocked that she was traveling alone, Katie mentioned that she thought it was sad that American women did not feel free to travel alone.

Women are just so conditioned to be scared. They are so conditioned to be scared, and to be afraid for themselves and have to look over their shoulder all the time. Women have to fight more. I just think that it is sad though that we don't have the freedom to walk, to walk proud or to walk knowing that nothing will happen to us alone (Katie, July 18, 2001).

Nomad discussed how refreshing it was to meet other women who were traveling alone because they could understand her mode of travel.

I met some other women who were traveling alone. It felt so nice because they understood what I was feeling traveling alone. They understand that you like to meet people, but don't think you are crazy. Because you meet so many people that are like "Wow, you're traveling alone? Aren't you bored or aren't you lonely?" I'm "Like yeah, sometimes I am." And they're like "Well, why don't you travel with someone?" And I'm like "Well, sometimes I just want to go." People think you are kind of crazy for doing that. Like "Wow, are you having any fun without anyone? Or aren't you scared to be alone?" "No." There's nothing wrong with it. So to meet someone else, they don't even have that second thought in their head, like "Yeah, of course you are traveling alone. Of course you are having a good time." That mutual

understanding is so comforting. And I just didn't feel crazy for traveling alone (Nomad, July 21, 2001).

After meeting these other solo women travelers, Nomad re-evaluated her perception of herself. So many people on her trip had told her that she should not be traveling solo, that she began to wonder if she was the only one and if she was crazy for traveling without a companion. This is why meeting those other women was so important for Nomad. Her perception of herself was reaffirmed and she was not crazy as she thought.

In subsequent interviews, I learned that Katie had changed her field of study from ethnic studies to women's studies because of what she experienced during her trip. She didn't have any expectations about Europe but her trip ended up being "amazing".

I learned a lot about myself. I had a lot of personal growth, more confidence in myself when I got back, just about being able to take care of myself and being able to travel alone. So that definitely helped me out, like now when I am going to school and I'm thinking about programs that I want to be involved in. That trip definitely influenced my life now (Katie, July 9, 2002).

Before her trip, Naomi, had just graduated college with a business major and had accepted a job offer at a company in New York. But after returning home, she decided that she was not going to take the job. Instead, she enrolled in a psychology Master's degree program. On her trip she finally felt that she had the confidence to pursue something she had always wanted, to pursue a job in counseling. The trip made her realize she was free to make changes in her life.

Freedom was very important to the women's agency. Freedom gave them an opportunity to alter their interactions with others and a chance to explore different possibilities for their future. They no longer needed to make decisions based on the choices their home community of practice gave them, but felt as if they were able to make their own choices.

BODY

"I think more often than not, being a woman has been helpful"

Jasper (07/05/01)

Third-wave feminists argue that today's women have a negative body image because of advertising (Cunningham, 1993). Advertising has become such a dominant part of the American culture that its messages to the society are the only messages being heard. These messages are in the form of advertisements that act as symbols for the American culture so that the "Johnson's make-me-your-baby powder woman is the only acceptable version of feminine" (Cunningham, 1993, p. 123). However, it is not the only option available for today's women. Cunningham's point is that most people in the American society are surrounded by these advertisements, whether they accept what the advertisements are selling or not.

It is Cunningham's belief that the image of the Barbie doll has had an impact on today's American advertisement campaigns, which has resulted in American society's obsession with straight long blonde hair, light colored eyes, large breasts and small

waists. In the process, Barbie has placed “impossible cultural norms of physical beauty norms,” one of which is the weight of 120 pounds (Cunningham, 1993, p. 123).

Many American women have tried to accomplish this ideal weight. Some have become tired of trying to obtain this goal and instead decided to take comfort in their own bodies (Felt, 1998). They have learned to live with what they were born with because they have developed a sense of self-awareness that allows them to be comfortable with the body they have (Berger & Thompson, 2000).

Through the varying waves of feminism, there have been many changes. Women now have the right to vote, the right to divorce and retain money and children, which they did not 100 years ago. But they still are not treated the same as men, one arena being employment. “The wage gap is still wide. A twenty-six cent per dollar discrepancy on average” (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 18).

The idea of traveling as a woman through Europe for a period longer than four weeks can be a very scary thought for some and a very exciting thought for others. Countless experiences, both positive and negative, are possible everyday during travel. The fact that “she” is traveling scares people. The chances of being mugged, physically overtaken and assaulted by a man, and/or raped are perceived to be greater for a woman than a man. The women I interviewed usually felt that they needed to be more aware of their environment than men, and to take certain precautions to minimize the risks. All of the women acknowledged this. Jean-Michelle for example knew that she was limited in what she could do while traveling solo.

I have to anticipate what is going to happen to be safe. Whereas I think that guys generally just go. Go and whatever they have. They can have no bag, they don't have a toothbrush, they have nothing and they can just go. They are not worried about their own physical body. They are not worried about their safety or anything. But for me that is always an issue.

It's always an issue (Jean-Michelle, July 6, 2001).

This same sentiment - of always not being able to go where you want - was expressed by Nicolette when she was discussing what it was like being a woman traveling alone.

Obviously a woman has to be more aware of what is going on around her and she has to take more precautions with just about everything but if you have enough sense you know where not to go and what not to do

(Nicolette, July 4, 2001).

Due to this heightened awareness, several of the women were very careful with what they did while they were traveling. They felt able to express themselves freely, but at the same time, they needed to make sure that they were not losing control – not drinking in excess, not flirting with men. Nomad discussed that when she traveled solo she was careful how much she drank.

When I travel alone, I don't drink, and if I drink, it's a drink or two, with people I've met or in the hostel bar where you can simply walk to your room. You know, maybe it means I don't go out as much. I'm okay with that (Nomad, July 25, 2001).

While discussing the risks that women have while traveling alone, Katie said that women have been conditioned to be aware of their body.

But it is sad that we have gotten to be conditioned that we are so afraid for our bodies, for being afraid of our belongings, to be afraid of our sexuality. Everything that is fundamentally female and feminine. That we are so aware of it. It is sad to me (Katie, July 18, 2001).

However, this did not dissuade participants from using their body in a variety of ways. Some used it for help, by looking helpless and lost, and some even used it to get good bargains. Most of the time, these women did not even know that they were doing it. I was also unaware of this until I started to notice number of codes I had found in the data where the women spoke about their bodies and how being female changed their traveling style.

Only two of my women, while conducting my first round of interviews, acknowledged using their body to their advantage. When I asked Jasper if being a woman had been a problem for her while traveling, she said no, it had actually helped her.

J: I think more often than not, being a woman has been helpful.

L: Helpful? Can you elaborate on that?

J: Sure. Like, if I walk into a situation where I really need help. If I walk into a situation and I go up to a man and say “Parlez-vous anglais?”

I am more likely to get help there. And if I think some of the feedback, is “Oh, it’s a woman who needs help.” So, that may come from giving someone not a sense of power, but a sense of helping this person who happens to be a woman. I think it’s easier in the sense of the whole helplessness that is attached to being a woman, especially if you are dressed in a very nice way. (In high pitched voice) “Parlez-vous anglais. I need help. Where do I get somewhere?” And I notice like my voice will change with things like that. Like, I’ll act nicer (Jasper, July 5, 2001).

Her frank discussion on how she used her body surprised me. Most of the women I interviewed emphasized being seen as equals to the men traveling by themselves because they went to the same tourist attractions, stayed at the same hostels, carried the same weight in their packs, and interacted with the locals in the same locations. The only difference was their interaction with the locals. Anais knew that she could get much further by playing up her femininity than by not.

I think at first it seemed like after talking to the guy travelers, and my first experiences in Paris, it would be like a little bit of an advantage to be a woman. And I used that, because it was easy to meet guys and some of them would help me out or whatever. And it seems to me that there was. I don’t know if you would call it like a fair balance, but like the fact that I was sort of manipulating them, like you guys have something that could help me, like a place to stay or they’ll buy me dinner or whatever. It’s like even though they might think I’m going to have sex with them,

which I'm not, but that's kind of like the even trade. If they think they're going to have sex with me but I know they're not, then they need to just have like -- because I give them the benefit of the doubt that they should just have respect for me as a person. And so for me that's the exchange. That's like the fair thing about it. Just because if they think they're going -- like if they think they're going to have sex with me, if that's what they're thinking, then they deserve to be taken advantage of (Anais, July 11, 2001).

I knew that many of the women I interviewed in Europe had not realized how they had used their female body while travelling, so I was not surprised when I spoke to them after they returned home that some of them denied using their bodies in such a way. However, when the six women whom I interviewed two or three times started to think about it, they realized that they had used their bodies and their femininity while traveling.

Oh, my gosh. That's another world, a door you never opened. That was interesting, because when I was in Egypt, there were few women, native women there. Or they were just not around. Sometimes I would get sort of favors or get my way or I'd get a better price by flirting or smiling or just the sake that I was a woman. Or sometimes I wondered if I was getting charged more but that definitely played a role in bargaining, or can I get a ride here. Oh, definitely. I didn't notice it so much, but my boyfriend definitely noticed it, that I was using that. Or taking advantage

of it or possibly abusing it. And actually it kinda of changed my personality for a while because it was a power I never felt like I had before. I thought I had much more power there that I had never had before. Oh, yeah. Definitely you almost felt like it was a bargaining tool (Nomad, September 29, 2002).

Naomi disagreed with the idea that she would use her sexuality to get her something. She said that she was aware of it because while she was in Malaysia she was asked to leave a library because the shorts she was wearing were too short. She said that she had consciously decided not to use it while interacting with others.

N: I think the exact opposite. I was trying not to use my gender and sexuality because I was an American and it was kinda obvious. I mean I look like I'm an American. I was trying to respect their country, because when I was in Malaysia I got kicked out of the library for wearing shorts. I was wearing a sweatshirt so it was covering my upper body completely, but. I mean my shorts. I don't wear short shorts, so it was up to my knees, but you could see the bottoms of my knees, my knee caps. And they kicked me out because I was being disrespectful of their culture. After that, I mean I was really upset. I felt really bad. I was just upset at myself because that was really disrespectful on my part so after that I tried to respect other people's cultures in their countries. I tried not to use my sexuality to get what I wanted.

L: But you were aware of it though?

N: Oh, I was definitely aware of it. Also the men in European countries are very open. They will slap your ass, they will grab you, they will kiss at you. You know like one guy tried to kiss me. It's just I wasn't comfortable with that so I would try to not to use my sexuality because I didn't want that kind of attention. You know what I'm saying? I don't think. I can't recall any time that I used my sexuality to get what I wanted (Naomi, September 26, 2002).

According to Naomi, having that negative experience at the library early on in her travel experiences had made her aware of her body. When I asked the other five women in the subsequent interviews if they had negative experiences like Naomi's, they said no. They had only positive experiences, but they did not like the fact that by using their body they had been given special privileges.

The way these women treated/presented their body while traveling shows how embedded our society's ideas of women's bodies are. These women used their body to their advantage, if they could, or concealed them if they thought their bodies might pose a problem. Being constantly aware of their body made these women very attentive travelers.

LONELINESS

“The loneliness can open you up”

Vegan (11/19/02)

If social identities are defined as individuals knowing that they belong to a certain social group together that has value to them (Kihlstrom et al. 2002), then what do they feel when they are away from the group or if they do not feel valued? Loneliness.

“Loneliness is a multifaceted phenomenon, often characterized by an unpleasant, painful, anxious yearning for another person or persons” (Ponzetti, 1990, p. 336). This phenomenon can be a very unsettling emotional experience that can signify when individuals’ relationships with others are inadequate in some way (Ponzetti, 1990).

Loneliness can also be seen as “an emotionally charged assessment with a markedly negative tone that can include strong feelings of desperation, depression, impatience and self-depression” (Kraus, Bazzini, Davis, Church, & Kirchman 1993, p. 37). It does not consist only of how individuals evaluate their interactions within a society, but is related to their self-esteem.

According to Peplau and Perlman (1982) there are three generally accepted underlying assumptions about loneliness. Loneliness is “a perceived deficiency within an individual’s reality, a subjective experience instead of an objective feature in an individual’s reality, and is an unpleasant and stressful experience” (Peplau & Perlman, (1982, p. 3).

This phenomenon of loneliness “exists in every age group and has become an increasingly common problem for millions of Americans” (Ponzetti, 1990, p. 336). He

also states that individuals suffering from loneliness usually have an “interpretational deficit that exists as a result of fewer or less satisfying personal relationships than a person desires” (Ponzetti, 1990, p. 336). They usually have problems with intimacy and companionship, resulting in a negative reaction to stress when they do not know how to handle a certain experience. This uncertainty about how to handle experience promotes a sense of helplessness. This helplessness is a learned response and suggests that as individuals experience a loss of control, they begin to feel hopeless and become stressed with their loss of control over the experience. “This feeling fractures people’s self-esteem and causes them to believe they cannot help themselves” (Ponzetti, 1990, p. 338). Ponzetti believes he can create preventive strategies to stop individuals from developing loneliness through intervention to help individuals overcome feelings of stress and loss of control.

But is loneliness more likely to happen to women than men? According to Newman (1986), women are more likely to suffer emotional hardships than men. These hardships include the absence of a spouse and social isolation. However, he could not find a correlation between the hardships women underwent and the amount of loneliness they felt. His data suggests that never-married women have lower levels of sadness than never-married men, married women, or married men (Newman, 1986).

Loneliness, according to our society, is not one of the more pleasant emotions we can experience. Feeling lonely can bring up the idea of wallowing in self-pity and feeling alone and afraid. We are after all social creatures and we need to be interacting with others. But the women I interviewed had voluntarily left their family and friends to

be alone. Sometimes they spent days without speaking to another person because they were staying in a hotel and none of the staff spoke English. These days were filled with loneliness because they felt so isolated. But those were not the only times that they felt isolated. Even when they were surrounded with backpackers, who spoke English, they felt lonely. Their ability to endure loneliness informed their identity because it was no longer a matter of being isolated from others but was a choice not to interact.

Deciding to travel alone meant that the women I interviewed chose the possibility of significant isolation over the company of a traveling companion. At times they missed not having someone to talk to, but not having to compromise with a companion outweighed this. They did not want to discuss where they were going and what they were going to do with another person. They stated that they wanted to make these decisions independently because at home they were not allowed to. However, they had no idea how lonely and isolated traveling solo was, even though other travelers usually surrounded them and they were able to e-mail and speak on the telephone with family members.

Several women, when asked to identify their lowest emotional point while traveling, discussed the loneliness they felt at times.

The loneliness of traveling alone is the worst. I have always been lucky enough to find hostels. So, for instance in Rome, I couldn't find one. So I had to stay in a hotel. For three days in a hotel by myself. I did not speak to another human being for three days. And that was ridiculous. That was just. Think about it. When was the last time you ever not

spoken to someone for even a day? That was rough. So, the loneliness has been the worse. Definitely (Maureen, July 5, 2001).

The loneliness. It was really hard for me when I moved to Germany. I rented a room in an apartment, but the owner, she was really cool, she was 65 and a psychotherapist, but she was only in Munich 3 days or so out of the week, because she had another house in the country and just came to Munich and rented out space. One of the other rooms in the apartment was actually an office that a woman was renting out. So I was the only one living there most of the time. I could have friends over and whatever if I needed, but at first I didn't have any friends. So it was just really lonely. Solitude is definitely my hardest point (Nomad, July 25, 2001).

Even though they felt alone, and at times were tempted to board the next plane to United States, they all said they stayed because they knew that dealing with this loneliness was another reason they were traveling alone. They learned from it.

The low point for me is, which I would get anywhere when I am by myself, is I'll have waves of loneliness. Those waves. I don't want someone to try and erase the wave. To remove the wave or to make it go lower. I just want. I kind of want it. I want to feel that too. Because that is one of your choices or one of my choices when I came here by myself.

It was to feel by myself, to feel that I don't really need someone with me (Jean-Michelle, July 6, 2001).

Some of the most educational things I have learned have been when I was really low or I feel lonely. There have been times that I've either had to be around people or kind of sought out a group in a hostel when I just don't feel like being alone. And what's really powerful, I think, is that I learn at that moment, even if I want to meet people, I don't need be with these people and maybe I don't feel like being with THESE people. So maybe I can choose to be alone even if I feel like being with people over being with people that I don't want to be with. That was such a powerful moment when I realized that (Nomad, July 25, 2001).

At times the loneliness was hard on some of the women. However, others did not have the same responses to traveling alone. They saw that as they traveled, other travelers constantly surrounded them. They knew if they wanted to be alone, they could go off and be alone, but doing this would not allow them to meet other people.

With traveling, it's kinda like I made the opportunities to meet people occur, because I met so many people because I was forward enough to say "Hello. Where are you from where? I'm from there" (Wandering Girl, July 21, 2001).

When I asked them during the subsequent interviews how they dealt with loneliness while traveling, they had varying responses. Vegan had felt lonely only a few times

during her trip, but had decided to turn this unpleasant emotional experience into a learning experience.

I felt lonely a couple times, like when I was in a really frustrating situation or my plans did not go like I thought they would. And if I had been in a negative headspace when that happened, it would have been really overwhelming. But if I looked at it positively, I think though that it could work out really well and I could learn and grow. Also, I sometimes dealt with it by reaching out to people, just strangers, who could help me out and try to see if anyone else could help me or be a friend to me when I needed one. Because the loneliness can open you up. You can meet people because you are more easily accessible when you are open to new people (Vegan, November 10, 2002).

Nomad also felt that her time alone allowed her to reconnect with herself and deal with things that she had not been thinking about while at home.

I finally got a chance to be alone, issues came up that I had to deal with, just personal things or certain feelings. Some things that I had to deal with. And I think that when you are alone, when you are traveling alone, these things can resurface. When traveling alone, we get a chance to do that. We get a chance to pay attention to ourselves; we get a chance to listen to our inner voices that we don't hear when we are with other people all the time. When we are in our daily lives, when we are not traveling or when we are not alone, we don't pay attention to those.

That's why it is so to great travel alone because all these issues come up.

And we are allowed to hear them and to recognize them (Nomad,

September 29, 2002).

Learning to live with that uncomfortable feeling of loneliness gave the women a chance to open up because they had the opportunity to learn things about themselves, to deal with issues that they had not thought of, and to meet new people. They, like Jean-Michelle, welcomed the waves of loneliness because it gave them space away from people and things that they could not get away from at home.

However, Naomi said that she did not feel lonely during the course of her travel experiences.

I'm just a really friendly person naturally and regardless with someone or alone, I am always talking to people. Especially because I was alone, I was always meeting people. Like every place I ended up meeting someone. So I was never actually really alone (Naomi, September 26, 2002).

All of the women spent time in hostels, interacting with other backpackers. But only Naomi suggested that she was never alone, while the other women stated that they were alone because they did not know people they were meeting and missed things from their home environment. She recognized that she was not isolated from others and that she did not need to feel lonely because if she wanted to speak to someone, she could.

Loneliness was something that the women prior to their trip had not really counted on. Not being able to stay in a hostel because it was too full and spending time

in a room not being able to speak to anyone left these women feeling terribly alone. However, it was by being by themselves in a way that they had not ever been before. That they were allowed to “live inside their heads” (Nomad, July 25, 2001) and deal with issues that they could not while in the home community.

SUMMARY OF COMPONENTS – PLANS FOR FUTURE TRAVEL

From my data analysis, I noticed three components that the women discussed when taking their insider trajectory in the backpacker community of practice. Each of the components summarized feelings that participants experienced during the course of their trip. As the women interacted with the three components, they were moving from an inbound trajectory to an insider trajectory in the backpacker community. The three components discussed where how the women obtained mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. This sharing of experiences continued throughout their trips. The six participants I was able to interview upon coming home had changed and felt they no longer fit in.

I found that I did not connect with people, especially initially when I came back. I would talk to anyone about my trip or about life or anything and it didn't really matter. But if you met the people who hadn't traveled, they don't understand. They don't understand why I would want to go anywhere else when I had everything here. They didn't understand why I would want to. So, I tended to have more in common with people who

have traveled, people who are familiar with going to different places and experiencing new cultures (Naomi, July 1, 2002).

One of the participants, Anais, upon returning home after spending a year in France, was teased by her family.

At first, I didn't know what I was going to do, so I was feeling pretty low. Coming back I had nothing. And I didn't really talk to anyone about what I did because it was more for me. But, it seemed like my family really didn't care about it or just thought I was. They started teasing me, "Oh, you're French, you're this snob now." And I didn't think I was at all and I was like "You guys need to lighten up." But they would start teasing me about every little thing, like if I said "I don't like that kind of music, or I don't like that food that way". They were "Oh, you're just a French snob" (Anais, November 12, 2002).

Anais's family teasing and Naomi's inability to connect with fellow Americans upon their return made these women feel more like outsiders than they had before they left. Upon returning home and spending a few weeks with their families, they both spent time away from their families. Naomi left New York and moved to California and Anais spent time with friends in California trying to find a job in San Francisco. This feeling of separation from mainstream society is why the participants felt they needed to travel again. When I asked them why they kept traveling, two of them answered that they liked to learn about new cultures and it was a better way to learn about them than a textbook. The other four said that they traveled in order to meet new people.

But if meeting new people was the main reason, why are they not going across the street and meeting their new neighbors? Possibly because in meeting the neighbors across the street in the United States of America, they would be presenting the identity formed by the home community. But by traveling and meeting new people abroad, they are presenting the identity created through their interaction and participation within the backpacking community of practice. They believe this identity is a truer representation of themselves than the home community identity. This backpacker identity can only be maintained/sustained while in the backpacker community of practice and the women feel it dissipating as they spend more time in the United States upon their return home.

CONCLUSION

Through their experiences alone and participating in a community of practice, these women felt that they could depend on themselves. However, participation in the backpacker community of practice was short-lived. Upon returning home, the women felt isolated from their communities of practice. They were no longer participating in a community to the degree they had been while traveling. They were placed on different trajectories within the communities of practice that they had been a part of before they left home. This feeling of isolation from the backpacker community made them want to travel again. They wanted to regain membership of a community of practice they felt they were a part of, or, in other words, they wanted the identity that belonged to the backpacker community. Because they felt it more strongly represented who they were. “I feel more like myself when I travel” (Jesse, July 18, 2001).

While interacting with the backpacking community of practice, these women underwent a change in identity. From my analysis, it became clear that these changes were caused by the women's increased sense of agency, empowerment of body, and the experience of overcoming loneliness during the course of their travel experiences. Each of these components can be seen as practices of the backpacker community of practice. In order for these women to gain entrance to the community and to move toward the center, toward core membership, they had to learn these practices.

CHAPTER V

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a model of how the identities of the women I interviewed changed through their participation with two communities of practice, the home community and the backpacker community. I created the Multiple Communities Model (MCM) by applying Wenger's model for communities of practice to my study's findings. This chapter also presents the tensions that the participants felt participating in multiple communities of practice, and the trajectories that they used to navigate through the communities.

IDENTITY CHANGE WITHIN TWO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Individuals construct their identities through their interactions with others. These interactions occur within a certain community, so the more communities individuals interact in the more opportunities to explore different identities they have. This is not to suggest that people have multiple personalities where they have a specific identity for each of the communities they are participating in. Rather, by participating with varying types of people, individuals are able to explore different ways of viewing the world and how they want their identity to be exhibited.

Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice Model enabled me to investigate the levels of participation individuals have within communities and how this participation

impacts their identities. But Wenger's community of practice model could not explain certain questions that I encountered while analyzing my data. Two of these questions are:

1.) According to Wenger the diverging and converging of trajectories is what defines our identities. The women in my study felt they were being pulled in two separate directions because of their membership in two different communities. How does interacting with two communities of practice, the home community and the backpacker community, create diverging trajectories that define the identity of these women?

2.) The backpacking community of practice was where these women felt they participated with core members and believed that this identity was who they really were. If they did not feel this same identity while in their home community, why did they always return home and not stay indefinitely in the backpacker community?

To answer these questions, I developed a model that incorporated data from my study with Wenger's framework. This model shows how two communities of practice give rise to identity change and development. The model can be found in Figure 1.

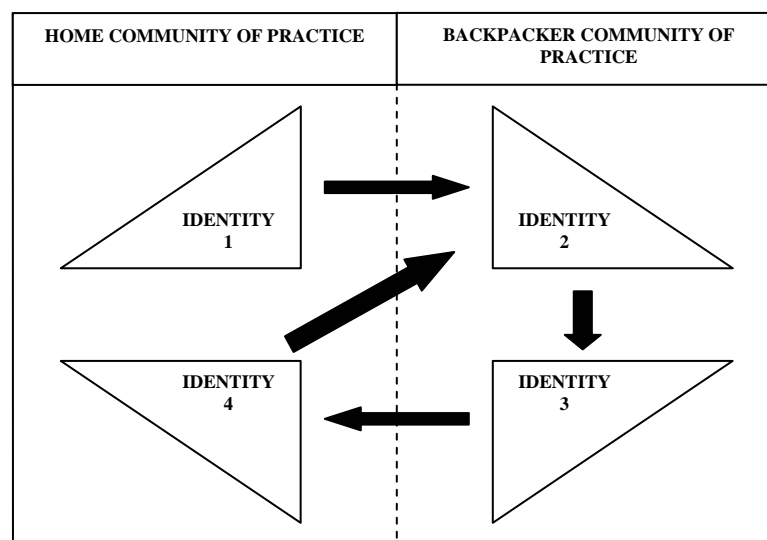


FIGURE 1. Multiple Communities Model

The movement each from each identity triangle is caused by the women's engagement with members of two communities of practice – their home community and the backpacker community.

Members they associate with in Identity Phases 1 and 4 (the home community of practice) include friends and family members, while members the women interact with in Identity 2 and 3 are other backpackers. As they move through the identities, they participate with the members differently while their relationships with those members changes through time. It is this participation that facilitates their identity change.

Identity 1: Push from home community

Before interviewing each of the women, I asked them questions regarding their background, such as age, educational level, and where they had traveled abroad to prior to this trip. I also asked them questions regarding their family for example, if they had been exposed to travel or to people from countries other than the United States of America at an early age. I also asked them what socio-economic status they grew up in.

It was not surprising to me that twelve out of the thirteen of the women either held a Bachelor's degree or were working on it. The one woman who did not was a licensed message therapist. All of the women reported they were from lower middle class (1), middle class (9) or upper middle class (3). These results fit with what Riley (1988) reports based on her interviews with backpackers traveling through Australia. Her participants were also primarily middle class.

The age range of Riley's (1988) participants was 25 to 33 and the age range of my participants was 19 to 35, the average age being 24. They no longer had obligations to their families or to school because a majority of them had graduated. They had leisure time to travel instead of going straight in to the job market. Although not all participants' family members supported them traveling solo, they did not deny their daughters this opportunity.

But as I mentioned earlier, upon return the women did not feel as though they were members of the home community. Anais was teased by her family for living in France for a year which made her feel low and Naomi could not connect with other Americans upon returning home from her trip. This feeling low and unconnected led me

to assume that they did not feel like participating members within their home community and were on the periphery because they could not be core members.

While in the periphery, the women felt they were either on a peripheral trajectory or on an outbound trajectory. Those on a peripheral trajectory know that they cannot participate in the same way as the core members but they do wish to stay in that community. Those on an outbound trajectory, on the other hand, try to find an alternative community to participate in. Regardless of which trajectory these women were on, they were not treated as core members and they knew that they would never be treated as core members and could never fully participate, so they went looking for another community of practice.

I am dependent on my family and they always help me figure out who I am. But this trip gives me the opportunity to do it by myself (Nicollette, July 4, 2001).

While entering a new community of practice involves a lot of learning, exiting one does as well. When leaving a certain community of practice, individuals must develop “new relationships, finding a different position with respect to the community, and seeing the world and oneself in new ways” (Wenger, 1998, p. 155).

Feeling marginalized by the members of their home community of practice, these women left the United States and their home community of practice to travel and participate in the backpacking community of practice. In this community, the women were able to participate more and felt that they were on an insider trajectory. This trajectory is what pushes these women into the second phase of the model – Identity 2.

Identity 2: Pull towards backpacker community and pushed from home community

Feeling marginalized by the members of their home community of practice, these women left the United States to travel solo. Reasons the women gave for traveling varied. Some had just graduated from college (5 women), some were still in college (4 women), and some were taking time off from work to travel (4 women). Ten out of the thirteen planned on traveling solo prior to their departure. Three reported that they knew what a great opportunity it was to go to Europe, and even though they wanted to go with friends, decided to go alone when their friends could not come.

While on the insider trajectory of the backpacker community, these women had time to learn the ropes. They were able to see what types of practices went on among the established core members. After learning what these practices were and how to participate, these women began to participate with the members. This participation with others took them off their inbound trajectory on to an insider trajectory. In this new community, they were experiencing things that they knew members in their home community would not value.

I want to talk about my trip, how incredible it is and want to share it. And the fact that you are out here and everyone likes to speak with all the travelers. If you are a backpacker, you and all the other backpackers have similar experiences. But when I go home, and I tell my best friends about it, they'll say "Oh, how nice" (Jesse, July 18, 2001).

They were participating in ways that they had been unable to in their home community. In the home community, they had had very limited, if any, participation with core

members. This was unlike the participation they had within the backpacker community. They were able to interact with core members and participate as full members. Through this increased interaction, they realized the beliefs held by their home culture had limited them because they had held them back from fully participating as they were in the backpacker community. Katie realized that while traveling alone, being away from her safety nets was a good thing.

Like sitting on the train and thinking, “Oh, shit. I am in Europe. I’m in Spain. I’m in France. I’m in Paris.” All those moments when you realize that you are just there and that you are okay and that you are experiencing a different culture. And you are totally away from all of your safety nets. It just feels good (Katie, July 18, 2001),

Being away from the safety nets felt good because in their home communities, they had not been allowed to be away from these nets. Their family and friends were always there making sure that nothing happened to them. This net cast by friends and family had a some what constricting effect on the women’s actions.

Increased participation within the backpacking community left these women feeling marginalized by their home community. Upon initial entry into the backpacker community they were not told what they could and could not do, they had to learn the practices of the community. This learning includes developing agency, dealing with loneliness, and becoming aware of the gendered nature of travel. The core members taught them what things the community valued: trekking to difficult-to-reach locations, avoiding tourist attractions, and solo travel. Because these values differed from the

values of their home community, and they accepted these values as their own, the women felt marginalized by their home community. This marginalization occurred when they realized that the safety nets they had always felt from their parents actually were constricting them and limiting their choices in life.

They knew the values and practices of their home community, but they also knew that the backpacker community of practice was to a degree temporary. Naomi described it as her last hurrah.

Traveling makes you leave the comfort zone completely. But at the same time I feel like I am in a bubble world right now. I am just traveling and there are all these exciting things to do. I have no responsibility whatsoever. My worst problem is what country am I going to go to next? I know that when I go back I am going to have a lot of responsibilities I am going to have to deal with. So this is my last hurrah (Naomi, July 18, 2001).

Gaining participation within in one community while feeling marginalized in another was hard for the women to deal with, especially upon returning home when these women felt a pull in other directions: one to go back home and experience marginality and two to travel and experience peripherality. This pull was very difficult for the women to handle and they felt that they could not abandon their home community to travel indefinitely, but they knew that they were not happy with the level of participation they were allowed in their home community. It was this pull that compelled the women to travel abroad again, and as often as possible, leading to the next phase, Identity 3.

Identity 3: Equally pulled by backpacker community and home community

As these women increased their participation within the community of backpackers, they became peripheral members in the backpacker community. While participating with the backpacker community they were members that could participate, to a certain degree, with other members and core members of their home community. With this new understanding of how they fit in their home community, they were not as hesitant to leave the backpacker community as they had been in Identity Phase 2, because they could now identify with both communities.

Basically at some point, maybe tomorrow I may say I want to go home. I may not be able to go home to my house, but I can reach out at any point right now and go home (Wandering Girl, July 21, 2001).

They were balanced between the two communities of practice. They knew their levels of participation within the two and were able to manage it. While traveling they were able to participate with the backpacker community while knowing that they were not core members of this community. They knew that their participation with the community was temporary and that they had to return to the community that they had left to go travel. Their membership within their home community was important to them, even though they had limited participation levels.

They knew their home communities were not temporary and in constant flux, as the backpacker community was, and that they had established roles within their home communities. Roles they knew it was important to go back to because their home community contributed to their identity.

They were accepted members in communities that they thought were important and were able to participate peripherally in both. This identity, Identity 3, is what the women took with them as they went home from their travels.

Identity 4: Equally pushed away from backpacker community and home community

The balance between the two is short lived during Identity 3 and the women begin to feel that they are becoming marginalized members in both the home and backpacker communities. When the women returned home, they felt like they were contributing members of the home community. They had participated within the backpacker community and they had felt it was time for them to go home and be participating members in their home community. Yet when they returned home, they felt they did not belong. They saw themselves different from other Americans because they did not feel that they were typical Americans.

I think that is very ethnocentric as far as a typical American to think that.

Thinking “Oh, well you have everything you need in America and you can’t handle things here and that’s why you want to travel” (Naomi, July 1, 2002).

While participating with the members of their home communities, the women were no longer members of the backpacker community. They attempted to keep in contact with the friends they had made during their trip and to interact with individuals who travel, because when they came home and “met the people who hadn’t traveled, they don’t understand” (Naomi, July 1, 2002). However, because they were not interacting with

backpackers at backpacker hangouts and traveling with their backpack, they were not in the backpacker community.

Being in their home community did not allow them to feel the same way as when they were in the backpacker community. They found that they did not agree with what a lot of other Americans thought and that their travel experiences were not important to others around them.

I'm a little bit more accepting of Americans now, than when I was when I first came back. When I first came back I was so frustrated because of a lot of people really don't like foreigners. And I think that it stems from the fact that a lot of Americans just don't travel and they don't see it (Naomi, July 1, 2002).

Due to their marginalization in both communities, they felt alone. This feeling of isolation and frustration is what led the six I remained in contact with to schedule their lives in their home communities in such a way that sufficient time for travel was possible.

The pull between the home community and the backpacker community was felt by all six of the women I was able to have subsequent interviews with. They felt tension between being on an insider trajectory within the backpacker community and being on a peripheral trajectory within their home community. These trajectories created tension in the women because they knew how to participate in their home community, but wanted to participate differently.

As presented in Chapter 4, there are three components of the backpacker community of practice that the women discussed: agency, body, and loneliness. These three components helped them gain access to this community and become members. While in Identity 1, in their home communities, they were unaware of these components of the backpacker community, because they were not the same components as those of their home communities. It was gaining access to the backpacker community and moving away from the home community, when they moved to Identity 2, that they started to become familiar with these three components. In Identity 3, while still in the backpacker community, they had been interacting with the backpacker community for long enough that they were seen as members. It is these three components that they came home with in Identity 4. However, instead of being seen as members, they were once again on the periphery because the components that are important to the backpacker community are not the components that are important to the home community.

This pull between the two communities and what components are important in each one is what leads the women to travel again. They do not feel “at home” in their home communities because the components that they believe are important (the backpacker components) are not valued. So, these women desire to travel again to become members in a community where these components are valued and they move from Identity 4 to Identity 2. They do not move to Identity 1 because they have had exposure to the backpacker community and have come to value its components (agency, body and loneliness). But once they move from Identity 2 to Identity 3, they know that

the backpacker community is temporary and they must return to their home communities. This constant cycle is something that the women are caught in because they cannot feel “at home” in either of the communities, even though they try to alter their home communities by moving or changing jobs or by traveling more often.

TENSIONS

In Identity 3 and Identity 4, the women felt outward tension. This tension was created by the women feeling pushed or pulled in two directions; to be a member of the backpacker community and to be a member of the home community. The forces of both communities pulled at the women constantly while they were traveling and they felt in balance between the two because they were peripheral members in each one while traveling.

However this balance was momentary because once they returned home, their home community marginalized them. Within a matter of months, they felt tension develop because they wanted to participate at a different level than they were allowed. They knew to what extent they were able to participate within the backpacker community and how they had felt while participating. They wanted to have the same feeling participating in their home communities when they returned home.

This tension between the two communities was hard for the women to sustain in their daily lives. They found themselves limiting their participation with other members of the community and finding membership in other communities, either by moving elsewhere in the nation, or by interacting with people from other countries. Doing this

eased the tension they felt, but did not end it. The only way they saw to handle this tension was to travel aboard as often and for as long as they could. They knew that they would need to return home and would not be able to sustain their membership in the backpacker community indefinitely, but they also knew that in order to relieve the tension they felt in their home community, they needed to leave it every now and then.

Both in Identity 3 and Identity 4, the women were on boundary trajectories by having the same membership within two communities at the same time (Wenger, 1998). These trajectories are difficult for individuals to maintain because the pull is exactly the same between both communities that are not compatible because sooner or later one community will pull harder than the other and the balance will be broken. Tension was created for these women because they felt pulled in opposite directions and were trying to maintain membership in two communities which had completely different practices, many of which were contradictory.

TRAJECTORIES

Interacting with the backpacker community of practice, whether on an inbound or an insider trajectory, made these women feel differently about themselves. They knew that if they wanted to they could move towards the core of the community and become members, while in the home community this was never an option because they were not part of the male hierarchy. After traveling, their agency had increased and they were not as dependent on their families. This forced them to re-evaluate the shared repertoire of their home community.

In the backpacker community, these women felt they were on an inbound trajectory. They did not know how to participate in this new community of practice, so they were on the periphery. But while being in the periphery, non-participation gave them a chance to learn about the community through observation. Once learning how to participate in the community, they began to participate in the periphery. This participation level was why all of the women felt that interacting with the backpacking community had changed their identity, and why they felt agency in a way they had not at home. They were aware of how their actions would affect their surroundings even before they acted them out.

They knew their self-worth, what they wanted to be, and were capable of, yet they did not feel this all the time. They knew that being women, traveling alone, they had to be aware of their surroundings. Being aware that they were seen by some as prey (easy to mug and/or rape), these women had to admit that being a woman did have its disadvantages.

I think it has been a different experience, because I have to constantly be aware of myself and aware of my surroundings. Like being robbed because you are alone. Like just walking down the street as a woman, it's just not as easy as when you are with somebody else or when you are with a guy. Or if you are a guy (Katie, July 18, 2001).

They knew they were participating in a predominately male form of travel so they had to travel like the men to gain entrance into the backpacker community of practice, while at the same time watch their backs to make sure they were safe.

Even though they had to take certain precautions while participating in the backpacker community of practice, they felt they were able to participate in it more fully than they could their own home community. And after traveling for at least one month in this community, coming home was a bit of a shock. They were no longer able to participate to the same degree they could while in the backpacker community of practice. Perhaps they were not aware of how to gain entrance into the community that they had left behind because they had never felt a part of it to begin with. When asked if they see themselves as third-wave feminists, some of the women said “yes” while others said “no”.

Katie saw herself as a “postmodern feminist.” Her description sounds a lot like third-wave feminism.

I just chose not to see feminism as influenced by one issue like class, or race or sexism. I think they are all connected and they intertwine and they all affect each other in different ways, in many ways. And I don’t want to see it as just one problem. That they are all problems and you have to tackle the system. I think that the women of our generation, it’s not just as black and white anymore, as it was on you know first-wave feminism, and in the 70s and the 80s. It’s not simple anymore, or as simple as it was as in radical or liberal. Or like all of those terms, I don’t think that they are enough to describe the issues that feminists have to deal with today if they want to get anywhere. They have to stop looking at themselves as a

certain group and look at it as ourselves as a group of many things (Katie, July 9, 2002).

Jasper said that she was not a feminist, but believed that women had it harder.

I am a believer that is it is hard to be a woman. I believe I should have access to things, but I do not think of myself as a feminist. I don't think of myself as someone who wants special rights. I don't think that I should be given privilege over anybody. But I do think feel that as an equal human being there are certain things I should be allowed to do. I believe I should be allowed equal education, and I believe I should be allowed equal access to jobs if I chose to pursue them (Jasper, September 23, 2002).

It was comments like this that made me realize these women knew there was inequality in the world and that they had to overcome male domination, but they did not want to label it that simply. There were more than two factors in play. They wanted to move away from the idea of men as oppressors and women as oppressed because that argument only served to constrain “women rather than inspire them to action” (Shugart, 2001, p. 134). This is one of the fundamental arguments in third-wave feminism.

ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES TO THE MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES MODEL

Using tourism, feminist theory, and socially constructed identity theory literature to inform my study helped me to move beyond the literature and create a model that deals with the impacts travel experiences have on the identity of women traveling solo.

My study informs each of the above mentioned bodies of knowledge in the following ways.

Within the field of tourism, very few studies have been done on how travel alters the identity of the people engaging in it, i.e. the tourists. Many studies have researched why people travel and what they learn from their experiences, be it a foreign language or cultural sensitivity, but very few have looked at how travel has changed the ways tourists view themselves when arriving home and why some tourists travel frequently for leisure. By looking at why tourists travel often and what they experience while traveling, tourism researchers can discuss travel as a learning experience rather than merely a leisure experience.

There are very few studies that look at the women of Generation X. How they see their lives and their communities is very different from that of second-wave feminists. These women, even though they did not all agree that they were feminists or that they were third-wave feminists, felt disconnected from the present-day American culture, leading them to travel. What they valued was not valued by their home community, which led them to look for a community containing their values. They found this in the backpacker community. This is very similar to why the third-wave feminists feel that they are different from the second-wave feminists; they feel they have different views on the world and pursue different goals. This study brings to light one of the ways in which third-wave feminists are dealing with their discontent with the American society. The fact that women belonging to Generation X are hesitant to consider themselves feminists, and leave the community that they are a part of, shows

how desperately young women need to be informed of their present position in society and what they can do to change it.

Moreover, this study adds to the complexity of Wenger's community of practice model. While he briefly mentions that individuals are members of several different communities of practice throughout their lives and can be members of several communities all at the same time, he does not discuss how individuals make sense of what they are learning and what their identity is when they participate in diverse communities of practice. This study deals with members moving from one identity to another, as they are moving through different communities of practice.

CONCLUSION

Through their experiences alone and participating in a community of practice, these women felt a change in agency and body image and were able to overcome loneliness. This resulted in identities different from ones they had had within their home communities. While interacting with backpackers, they learned that they could depend on themselves. However, the components they felt while interacting with the backpacker community (agency, body, and loneliness) were short-lived.

While at home, they had felt marginalized and were not able to participate fully with core members. Then while traveling, they at first felt peripherality in the backpacker community and marginality in the home community. After traveling for sometime or when returning back to the backpacker community after being home for a while, the women felt peripherality in the backpacker community and peripherality in

the home community. But it was while at home that all of the women felt marginality in the backpacker community and marginality in the home community.

In the midst of peripherality and marginality, the women felt great tension. This tension was created by the pull between their home community and the backpacker community. In their home community they already knew their membership roles and what levels of participation they were allowed while in the backpacker community they were not as certain of their roles but knew that they were not as limited in their levels of participation. This pull between the family and known expectations of the home community and the temporality and the unknowns of the backpacker community is what caused many of these women to continue to travel.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

She's got her ticket. I think she's gonna use it. I think she's going to fly away.

No one should try and stop her, persuade her with their power.

She says that her mind is made up. She knows where her ticket takes her.

She will her find a place in the sun.

(Tracy Chapman, "She's Got Her Ticket")

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to understand how American women experienced solo travel and what impact that experience had on their identity. To do this, I interviewed thirteen American women while traveling through Europe during the summer of 2001. I was then able to have subsequent interviews with six of the thirteen one year after returning home from their trips. From these interviews I was able to derive a model that characterizes how traveling and interacting with the backpacker community impacted these women's identities. Participation in a community of practice was key to their identity formation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, the research questions were:

How do American women traveling solo describe the impact solo travel has on their identity as female travelers?

American women traveling solo describe the impact solo travel has had on their identity by using words such as empowering, increasing self-confidence, and independence. By using these words, the women express how their trips are seen as a chance to experience something never felt while in their home communities. While at home they are marginalized and while in the backpacker community they are taking inbound or insider trajectories. These trajectories allow them to participate with other members and core members, instead of being pushed to the side.

What do they identify as factors contributing to this process?

These women identify their increase in self-confidence and tolerance to isolation from family and friends as contributing factors to their identity changes. In the backpacker community, these women are on an inbound trajectory. They know their self-worth and have a sense of who they want to be and what they are capable of. These feelings add to their sense of accomplishment.

Loneliness and feeling isolated from others is also seen as a contributing factor to identity change because in the home community, isolation is a bad thing. Being isolated from others is very uncomfortable and is sometimes used as a form of punishment. One of the worst things to happen to an individual according to the home community is to be on a deserted island, isolated from everyone. However, in the backpacker community,

isolation is a valid, positive part of the traveling experience. An individual must go through isolation for some period in order to transition from an inbound trajectory to an insider trajectory.

What happens to that identity upon their return?

When they return home, they report feeling different and know that they have changed because they feel more self-confident than before they left. However, members of their home community more often than not do not embrace this change and at times make the women feel bad for leaving. Instead of being accepted for who they have become, they are perceived to be escapists from reality. This feeling of resentment from others and general disapproval upsets several of the women. They cannot make their new identity fit in with their home community. Because of this, many feel anger when they first arrive home. However, over time, that anger lessens and they stop feeling as self-confident as before and start adopting their previous identities.

In order to keep the identity that they feel while participating in the backpacker community, they travel extensively. All of the six women I had subsequent interviews with had spent time out of the country traveling within two years of our first interviews. They travel abroad instead of dealing with members of their home community and trying to negotiate their new identity with that community. They go abroad to be part of the backpacker community where they know they could have the identity they want to have.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The *Multiple Communities Model* illustrates how two different communities of practice can pull individuals in two directions and how this pull affects their identities. Wenger (1998) would argue that interacting with other individuals within a certain community creates individuals' identity. My model suggests that interaction with others impacts identity, but interaction with one community of practice (backpacker) can alter individuals' identity within another community of practice (home). This alteration leads the individuals to wonder how to express themselves within each of the two communities and to develop an identity that is adapted to each community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION THEORY AND PRACTICE

This study clearly suggests the interrelatedness of the social context in which this learning takes place (communities of practice), and adult development theory (identity formation). It clearly demonstrates how our identity is impacted by whom we interact with and the level of participation we are allowed within the community. It also adds to the complexity of identity development by challenging the idea that identity is solely socially constructed. Women choosing to maintain an identity that is socially unacceptable shows that there is a personal choice as to the identity we form and maintain.

In practical terms this study illustrates and also challenges the notion of identity change as irreversible, suggesting learners need constant support to obtain new ways of viewing the world and themselves.

FURTHER RESEARCH

After concluding this study, I came to realize that I had only just begun it. Areas in which further research can be made include:

- Taking a longitudinal view of participants in a community of practice where they are marginalized and in a community of practice where they are core members to see whether a certain identity could sustain multiple trajectories, e.g., who is successful in which community(ies), and how has being a member of one community hindered or helped membership in the other.
- Interviewing men who travel alone for at least four weeks to see how they view their membership in the backpacker community and its impacts on their identities as well as to identify what components they see making up the backpacker community of practice.
- Re-formulate Wenger's Community of Practice model to add to its complexity by taking into account different memberships in differing communities of practice and how these other memberships affect one another. For example, when one is a core member in the backpacker community of practice, but a marginalized member in the home community of practice, how does being marginalized in one affect the core membership in the other?

CONFESSIONS OF A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

It has been a long hard road that got me where I am today. Trying to figure out how to end something that has taken me a lifetime to research and two years to write has been difficult. This study grew from the question, Why do people learn from travel? I knew that from previous personal experience and from speaking with other individuals that traveled extensively that they learned a lot from travel, but they could not verbalize what they actually learned. From this beginning and from this basic question, I reformulated the question from “what do people learn from travel” to “how does travel impact American women’s identity?”

I decided to look at the impact travel had on identity, because when most people started to talk about what they learned from travel, they used words like grew more aware, independent, and they used the word “changed”– I have changed from the way I was before. This word change is why I thought to look at the ways they saw their changes and how these changes affected their identities.

By using the community of practice model I was able to look at how these women had seen themselves changing through interacting with a different community (the backpacker community) and what happened to those changes when they returned home to their home communities. But by using this model, my life suddenly became overwhelmed with the words community of practice, shared repertoire, core members, peripherality and marginality. I started to lose focus on what my question was – how does travel impact American women’s identity? It was not until I created a model that

dealt with the women, not their communities that I was able to find meaning in the community of practice mess I had created.

Realizing that whom we associate with and what communities of practice we are a part of affect our identity was eye-opening for me. I began to realize that I no longer have to travel abroad to have the identity that I enjoy – Identity 3. I can create a new identity based on knowing what trajectory I want to take in my interactions with members of my home community. Taking an inbound trajectory, instead of an outbound trajectory, would enable me to learn how to participate with other members of the community and with core members. Since interacting with core members was what I was missing before I started traveling, perhaps my trajectory at home would change to an insider trajectory.

While traveling through Europe the summer of 2001 to collect my data, I did a stupid thing. I left my passport at a friend's house and traveled to France without it. At the hostel they said that I needed to have a passport in order to stay the night there. Without a passport, the hostel employee told me that I was stateless because I was not carrying federal documentation to prove my nationality. And until I was able to resolve the issue of not having a passport, I would not be able to stay in any hostels. Needless to say, I resolved the issue quickly and was able to spend the night in the hostel. But the word 'stateless' has stayed with me perhaps because that is what I am – a person without a state to call home because I do not feel like I belong to either community of practice I have described in my dissertation. That is why I continue to travel, because I want to belong to a community of practice and be a core member of it, not on the periphery.

And perhaps that is what all of the participants want, to belong to a community and be on an insider trajectory allowing them to move through the periphery toward the core, not be pushed out into the margin of the community, left stateless.

So, with those confessions off my chest, this dissertation comes to a close and I travel on.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONALIZED REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Office of the Vice President for Research and Associate Provost for Graduate
Studies 1112TAMU

June 11, 2001

College Station, Texas 77843-1112

(979) 845-8585 FAX (979) 845-1855

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Lesley Tomaszewski

**Department of Educational Administration Human
Resource Development
MS 4226**

SUBJECT:

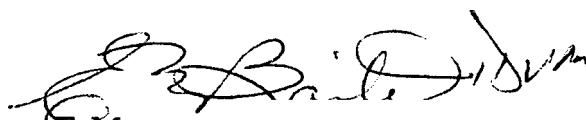
**Review of Exempt IRB Protocol Entitled "Experiential
Learning and Travel: The Lived Experiences of American
Women Solo Traveling in Europe" 22001-0S6E**

The above referenced protocol has been:

 X Approved June 6, 2001- JuneS, 2002
Conditionally Approved (see remarks
below) Disapproved (see remarks
below)
Tabled (see remarks below)

by the Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects.

The study has been approved for one year. Your protocol must be re-approved each year. If you desire to make any changes in your research protocol, the changes must be approved by the IRB before they are initiated. Any adverse reactions or events must be reported immediately to the Board



E. M.

url Bailey, Chair Institutional Review Board Human Subjects in Research

APPENDIX B**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FIRST ROUND OF INTERVIEWS**

How did you decide to make this trip?

Why did you decide to make it?

How did you decide where to go?

What was the significance for you in going alone?

What were the two or three high points of the trip? (get them to describe these in detail)
What made these so significant?

What were the low points? (at least one) How did you deal with them?

What did you learn about yourself during this trip? (get them to be specific and ask them to provide background information)

In what ways do you feel you have changed because of your travels?

If I met you before you left, and then met you after you returned, how would you be different?

What advice would you give to a woman your age who is thinking about making a trip on her own?

APPENDIX C**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEWS**

How was the rest of your trip after our interview?

What have you been doing since you have returned home?

Have you traveled since last year?

Do you have plans to travel this upcoming year?

Can you recall two or three high points of the trip? (get them to describe these in detail)
What made these so significant?

Can you recall the low points? (at least one)
How did you deal with them?

Do you feel that you have changed because of your travels?

Would you consider yourself a feminist?

Looking over the transcripts, I noticed that a lot of women enjoy traveling alone. They felt that if gave them a chance to explore their identity. Would you agree with this?
How did solo travel impact how you see yourself and others? Did you notice a change in your self-esteem when you returned back from your trip?

Some women told me that that while traveling alone is very lonely, but they would have it no other way. Why is this? How did you deal with the daily loneliness that you went through while traveling alone? How did traveling alone impact your experience of your trip?

Some women said that while traveling alone it gave them a chance to express themselves in a freeing way. How did this opportunity for self-expression impact your life, both while traveling and while at home? How did you express yourself differently since returning from your trip?

Several women have discussed that while traveling they were aware of the presence of their gender while traveling. How did you see yourself using your gender, more specifically your sexuality as a woman, while traveling. How has that influenced the way you are now?

APPENDIX D

CODES, CATEGORIES, AND THEMES

AGENCY	Self-confident	confidence	altered perspective	in charge
			be yourself	in control
			belief in self	increased self-esteem
			better understand self	it all worked out
			by yourself with others	learned about self
			carefree attitude	less worried
			confident	luck
			don't worry	meet different people
			empowered	meeting others
			felt accepted	motivated
			felt stronger	optimistic attitude
			fun	others' expectations
			get away from family	really lucky
			good feelings	rely on self
			good memories	responsible
			good situation	rite of passage
			got easier during trip	secure
			had no choices	self-confident
			has changed	self-conscious
			has faith	self-development
			has felt a difference	self-esteem
			has self-esteem issues	self-reliant
			have new abilities	travel stimulated change
			humor	was good for self
AGENCY	Self-confident	learning experiences	an adventure	learned to adapt
			communication skills	learning experience
			continuing education	no change
			no foreign language	not learned to adapt
			did not use guide book	practices what preaches
AGENCY	Acceptable Risk	fear	learning experience	
			afraid	no safety net
			dangerous	overpowered by others
			desperate	robbed
			doubt	feeling violated
AGENCY	Acceptable Risk	managed risk	fear	scared
			felt danger	
			breaking the rules	open minded
			did not wear watch	patience
			eager	planned experiences
AGENCY	Acceptable Risk	managed risk	easy form of travel	push limits
			enjoy	survival
			kept low profile	uncertainty with traveling

AGENCY	Acceptable Risk	managed risk	left comfort zone lost while traveling no expectations	used guide book worried no responsibilities
AGENCY	Acceptable Risk	risk	challenged did not feel danger frustration horror stories	not dangerous risks risky behavior violent behavior
AGENCY	Feeling American	american	anti-American statement anti-sight-seeing appearance important away from safety nets belief in social norms does not fit in at home envies family and friends ashamed of being American	family important feeling powerful pro-American statement pro-sight-seeing proud of being American strong family values tourist comment weak family values
AGENCY	Feeling American	backpacker	backpacker bubble backpackers' lifestyle bad experience enriched life	helped out by backpackers interacted w/ backpackers trusted others
AGENCY	Feeling American	cultural exposure	interacted with locals interested in history interested in other cultures	learn foreign language wore traditional clothing
AGENCY	Freedom	choices	became picky can't travel later do not answer to others	have choices makes choices
AGENCY	Freedom	freedom	adventure angry awesome feeling ability to change excited	experimental lifestyles lots of opportunities love yourself spontaneity
BODY		aware	be aware careful attitude clothing important	don't be careless people helpful take care of body
BODY		body	used body covered skin being woman helpful	exposed skin did not flirt use sexuality
BODY		feminism	not a feminist feminism	postmodern feminist women's issues
BODY		gender	feeling worthless fight for equality gender equality amongst backpackers	interaction with locals no gender difference
BODY		instincts	listen to instincts	weird feelings

BODY	instincts	trust it will all be okay	
BODY	men	interacting with men	male backpackers
BODY	sexism	comment about sex	male chauvinism
		male harassment	uneasiness around men
		compared to male backpackers	
LONELINESS	alone	alone	observe people
		can do it alone	good to travel alone
		companion compromise	wanted to be alone
		prior knowledge of companion	
LONELINESS	lonely	coping with loneliness	lonely
		isolation	negative experiences
		loneliness	sad
	descriptive note	bored at home	just graduated
		bored during travel	kept journal
		boyfriend	on summer vacation
		friendly traveler	prior solo travel
		prior solo travel	took time off work
		prior travel abroad	laziness
		prior travel to Europe	relaxing
		quit job	selfish
		have money and time to travel	
		laziness	selfish
		relaxing	

VITA

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